

The Eisenach Old Testament Selections

An

Exegetical-Homiletical Treatment

BY

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Texts for the Entire Church Year



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INTRODUCTION

THE exegetical and homiletical studies embraced in this volume intend so to help the preacher who uses them as he should, that he will do his work with constantly growing delight and enthusiasm and will find a highly pleased response from the people who come to hear him. The author's aim is high — he cheerfully admits it. Yet he would not think of attempting less. Time, of course, and the actual service which these studies will render alone can tell how nearly that high aim has been attained.

The author is the last man to fault the preacher who turns away with utter discouragement from a year's work on Old Testament texts when no adequate helps are available. The labor that such a line of texts requires in order to produce even moderately satisfactory sermons would be beyond most men. But even if a preacher should be willing to work to the limit, the ordinary helps at his command would leave him sadly in the lurch. If the commentaries on the New Testament leave much to be desired from the standpoint of the preacher who tries to use them for sermon purposes, those on the Old Testament are worse than disappointing in this regard. This is written with due deliberation after testing out the best of them during the long and arduous work done on the texts in this series. Hundreds of points are not touched upon at all in the commentaries. The author has not found a single one, for instance, which explains "thy rod and thy staff" in the Twenty-third Psalm. All kinds of vagaries, notional ideas, small and great aberrations, down to the boldest heresies, are constantly met with. In a hundred instances the preacher is not safely led; sometimes he feels and

even knows it. But where shall he find the solid ground which he needs for his exegetical and homiletical feet? When it comes to Old Testament homiletical helps, these are so few, most of them merely manufactured and plainly inferior at that, a few scattered good ones only by way of exception, that even in this direction the preacher is left without comfort for his soul. No wonder he raises the white flag and ere long turns to some more promising New Testament line of texts.

And yet we all feel, we ought to preach the Old Testament as well as the New. Our people have the same proper feeling; they long to hear a series of sermons on Old Testament texts, and it would be a pity for us not to satisfy this longing. So this series of studies has been prepared on what is undoubtedly one of the finest selections of Old Testament texts for the Church Year.

The author's previous experience in this line of work has stood him in good stead. Those who have used his three volumes on three different lines of New Testament texts will know what to expect on this Old Testament line. Yet the author willingly confesses that he went at these Old Testament texts with some misgivings. Very soon, however, he grew enthusiastic in the task. He found the texts so well chosen, their substance when fully set forth so rich in saving truth, many of them simply wonderful in their poetic beauty and divine power, and all of them so new and interesting homiletically, that the delight in working through them made the labor an actual pleasure. Is it too much to hope that at least some of this enthusiasm will transfer itself to the men who try faithfully to use this aid in their pulpit efforts?

The trouble with studying texts like these merely from commentaries, one text per week as it comes in order, is that the intent of the text as selected

for its particular place is usually not apparent. As one in this wise plods on through the series he becomes more and more bewildered. Even after close study the preacher will hardly know what to do with this or the other text. Perhaps after he has long passed some text its real purpose for that past Sunday will dawn on him; but then it will be too late. No need to say here how disastrously all this works out on the sermon. Of course, the preacher ought to study all the texts in any one cycle in advance, carefully determine the exact message of each in the place allotted to it, and thus master the entire chain before the first sermon is worked out. But that takes time, much time — how many preachers are able to carry it out? It requires several other things besides, which also are not always available. In the studies herewith presented this correlation has been fully worked out. Each text, as the preacher takes it up, is made to stand forth with its particular message clearly formulated. The preacher sees at once the destination to which that text intends to take him. There is no time lost in making false guesses, and no danger of after all going astray. It is the same work the author has done on the three lines of New Testament texts he has worked out, and which has helped to make those lines so universally attractive for our preachers. He expects the same effect here. In fact there is no other adequate and satisfactory way to deal with these texts and their grouping in the different cycles.

English type is used for the Hebrew in these studies, just because the expense had to be kept down. The simple system adopted is intended only to enable identification in the Hebrew Bible. The preacher who knows his Hebrew more or less will require no more; and the one who knows no Hebrew will at least be able to read the Hebrew words as he studies their exact meaning. No display of erudition will be

found, yet in each instance the exact sense of the original as the preacher ought to know it for his purpose is offered, as best the author was able to determine it. In this linguistic work he has had the very able assistance of his son-in-law, the Rev. J. E. A. Doermann, whose fine Hebrew scholarship and willing cooperation are herewith gratefully acknowledged.

A word remains to be said on the homiletical "suggestions" appended to each text study. Here the author has broken new ground. Instead of doing the usual thing by offering good homiletical thoughts, ideas as to how to turn the text in this or that direction, concluding with an array of more or less helpful actual outlines, the preacher will find something quite different. The principles of sound Homiletics are actually put to work on the text, and the outline is made to build itself up step by step according to these principles, starting with the simpler processes and advancing to the more complex, as one or the other text may warrant. Thus Homiletics ceases to be mere theory, it is made alive, is put to work, is made to furnish results, and all in such a way that one readily sees how the thing is done. So these "suggestions" constitute a kind of review in the practical principles of Homiletics; one may even venture to call them a post-graduate course in this particular chapter of Homiletics. The earlier texts naturally are treated more elaborately in this respect; in the later ones less is offered in order to avoid repetitions of processes already fully explained. The author hopes that this part of his work will please the preachers and profit them more than the old type of homiletical helps. The Homiletics that cannot be put to effective use had best be discarded. The kind here employed is for use only, not for ornament, and is made to prove it by submitting to use in actually furnishing the results we need.

With gratitude toward God, who has helped the author to do this work during the most trying period in his personal life thus far, these studies in the Old Testament Word are laid with humble hands at his feet, asking only that he bless them in some small measure for the upbuilding of his Holy Church.

THE AUTHOR.

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For the Hebrew consonants the nearest English equivalent has been taken. *Samech* and *sin* are both represented by *s*; *caph* by *k*, and *koph* by *q*; *tzaddi* by *ts*. *Aleph* is represented by ' and *ajin* by ' ; *jod* when a consonant by *y*. No attempt has been made to represent by means of English type the many Hebrew vowel niceties. Only *shva mobile* is distinguished by means of the small English *e*.

THE CHRISTMAS CYCLE

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Jer. 31, 31-34

It is really not a new road along which this Old Testament series of preaching texts is to lead the preacher and his hearers. It may seem new because these texts are from the Old Testament and not the New. But the moment the journey is begun we find ourselves following the old familiar road of the Church Year, along which other lines of preaching texts have already led us. That glorious old road looks different and new merely because of the time into which these Old Testament selections place us. It is the early spring time of God's revelation. The foliage is not yet out on the trees, patches of snow still linger in the ravines. It is the great season of *promise*. Heretofore in the gospel selections we enjoyed the season of *fulfillment*, the summer time of growing fruit; and in the epistles we delighted in the golden harvest days of *fruition*, the time of bringing in the heavy sheaves. That is what makes the difference. And that is what lends an especial attraction to these Old Testament texts. They show us how God prepared the salvation we now enjoy. All who prize that salvation and live in the richness of its grace will delight to review that preparation, to watch the bud grow which finally unfolded in so perfect a flower.

The entire Church Year is molded and shaped by the gospel texts. We see this at once when we look at the great church festivals. Our celebration of Christmas rests upon the great saving act of God in giving us his son and upon the gospel story that proclaims it. Easter is the festival flower of Christ's resurrection as recorded for us in the gospel history. First there is always the

great saving fact itself, secondly the historical record of it in the gospels, and then built on both the corresponding celebration. The epistles merely re-echo what these great gospel facts and their records contain, unfolding for us the full significance of what God has thus done. And so throughout the entire Church Year — the gospel texts strike the key note, all other texts only help to form the chord. Now, as the epistle texts lead a step forward beyond the gospels, so the Old Testament texts do the reverse; they go back to the roots from which the gospels and their contents grew. This is how in general we must view the selections here offered. These Old Testament texts are simply Old Testament counterparts to the corresponding gospel texts in the long line of festivals and Sundays as arranged in the Church Year. The old line gospel texts were the first to shape and mold the Church Year. The modern gospel selections, and that includes also the Eisenach series of gospels, merely reshape and remold the ancient pattern, making it still fairer and more attractive. And now the basic thoughts of the old line gospels, as recast in the beautiful Eisenach gospel selections, are reproduced once more, with lovely modifications and new colorings, in the Eisenach Old Testament selections. One of the most attractive features in the Eisenach gospel selections is the close, chain-like connection of the texts in each cycle, every new text linked with its predecessor. This feature is repeated in the Eisenach Old Testament selections, and will be found just as attractive here as in the gospels.*

The first half of the Church Year, termed the festival half, is often divided into three great cycles: the Christmas cycle, the Easter cycle, and the Pentecost cycle. We much prefer to divide it into five cycles: Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and

* This is corroborated by A. Pfeiffer, *Die neuen alttestamentlichen Perikopen der Eisenacher Konferenz*, p. XIV.

Pentecost. Instead of two very large and complex cycles plus one quite small, we obtain five far more proportionate in size. Instead of combining into one cycle diverse facts, like the Incarnation and the Manifestation in the Christmas cycle, and again the Passion and the Resurrection in the Easter cycle, our division into five distinct cycles makes each one of these great saving realities stand out independently by itself. There is also the added advantage that the details of these smaller cycles are more easily grasped.

The first cycle of the Church Year, called the Christmas cycle from its dominating festival, begins with the First Sunday in Advent, and extends to the Sunday after New Year. The significance of the four Sundays in Advent is plainly marked, and when once perceived will greatly aid the preacher, no matter what regular line of texts he may follow. The First Sunday in Advent always deals with Christ's coming in grace, and the Second with his coming in glory and in judgment. The two thus form a pair. The Third Sunday in Advent deals with Christ's forerunner, the Baptist, and his call to repentance. The Fourth, however, is already combined with the Christmas festival as practically a part of it, displaying the greatness of him who came into our flesh for our salvation. A subsidiary thought for the First Sunday in Advent is the idea of the Christian new year, the dawn of another year of grace. The Second always connects us with the end of the world and the great consummation then to be wrought. The Third, with its call to repentance as voiced by the Baptist, emphasizes the chief point in our Advent preparation. The Fourth is the Sunday of joyful faith in contemplating the God-man as our Savior. — Then follows the festival of the Incarnation, Christmas Day, holding up before our hearts the glorious fact itself, and the Day after Christmas dwelling anew on the fact and usually adding with emphasis our appropriation of

its saving power and blessedness. — The Sunday after Christmas might also be called the Sunday before New Year. It faces both ways, still carrying the Christmas thought, and yet dwelling on the course our earthly lives run. It is often treated as the last Sunday in the old year, with a text chosen accordingly. This is the case in the present series. — New Year's Day always connects this earthly time division with God's providence, care, and help for the Christian; and the Sunday after New Year (which, however, the calendar is often compelled to omit) amplifies and extends this thought.

With this general outline of the first cycle before us, it is a simple matter to discover the main intent and purpose of each of the Old Testament texts now offered. Jer. 31, 31-34 contains the fullest and most direct Old Testament promise of *The New Covenant* in Christ Jesus, full of the grace revealed in Christ's first coming. — Mal. 4, 1-6 foretells *The Final Judgment Day That Shall Burn as an Oven*, and calls on all of us to make ready. — Is. 40, 1-8 contains the entire message of the Baptist, its call to repentance as well as its promise of comfort in the Savior. We may summarize it in the prophet's own words: *The Voice Crying: Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord!* — In Deut. 18, 15-19 the Savior himself is revealed to us by divine promise, *The Great Prophet Like unto Moses*. He is the final prophet, like unto Moses, who was prophet and mediator in one, and yet far exceeding him because this new prophet is the divine Son himself. — Is. 9, 6-7, and Micah 5, 2-4 are the two texts for Christmas. In this volume we treat only the latter, showing us in the richest Old Testament light *The Divine Ruler Born in Bethlehem Ephratah*. The Isaiah text describes *The Greatness and the Grace of the Child Born unto Us in Bethlehem*. — The Sunday after Christmas comes with the tremendous warning, Is. 63, 7-16, with which to close the

year: *Misuse Not the Lovingkindnesses of the Lord, Lest Like Israel You Too Cry in Vain When It Is Too Late.* — Two texts are offered for New Year's Day, either of which we may use. In this volume we treat Ps. 90 only, which offers the grander theme: *God Everlasting, and Man Like the Withering Grass.* Yet Ps. 121 is very sustaining with its vision of *The Hills from Which Cometh Our Help.* — Equally satisfying is the selection of Ps. 73, 23-28 for the Sunday after New Year, with the assurance: *God, My Portion for Ever.*

Thus the distinctive features of the Christmas cycle are reproduced in Old Testament selections, yet without a trace of anything mechanical. The Old Testament texts are not mere parallels of the corresponding gospel texts, either those of the Eisenach or of the old line series; nor is there a mere duplication of the main thought of the gospel text. The rich storehouse of the Old Testament is opened up, and some of its grand jewels are brought out, each one freely chosen to grace the day for which it is to be used. They all shine with the Old Testament radiance and must, of course, be treated accordingly, and yet they serve most admirably this latest of New Testament eras, for the entire Old Testament, exactly like the New, is the Word of God that lives and abides for ever.

A number of the modern pericope systems carry Jer. 31, 31-34 as the text for the First Sunday in Advent. Its fitness for the threshold of the Christian Church Year is thus strongly attested. The entire section of the prophet's book, from which these few verses are taken, namely chapters 30-31, may be entitled: "God's Proclamation of Salvation for All Israel." Hengstenberg calls these two chapters "The High Song of Israel's Deliverance." The entire sec-

tion is full of the richest promises, and thus also the strongest comfort.

Jeremiah began his prophetic career in the year 629 B. C. The northern kingdom, Israel, as distinguished from Judah, had already been broken up, its people deported and scattered in far eastern lands. The southern kingdom, Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital and the central seat of its worship, was to share the same fate. It fell to the lot of Jeremiah to announce, during a period of about forty years, the coming of this terrible judgment of God, to a people unwilling to hear and heed. By nature a man rather timid and shrinking, in the hand of God, who used him as his mouthpiece, this priest of Anathoth became "an iron pillar and a brazen wall against the whole land," Jer. 1, 18; yea, "a fenced brazen wall" against whom men fought, but could not prevail, Jer. 15, 20. The opposition to his message culminated in shameful persecution and murderous attempts upon his life. He lived to witness the calamity that set in at last. There were several deportations, but the so-called Babylonian captivity is reckoned from 588 B. C., the date of the destruction of the Temple. Jeremiah was allowed to remain with the remnant left in Jerusalem after the captivity, and wrote letters to the exiles in Babylon to guide and sustain them till the day of deliverance should come. He predicted that the punishment would last for seventy years. His Jewish enemies finally carried him to Tahpanhes in Egypt, where he disappears from view. Tradition reports that for his continued stern warnings he was stoned to death.

The promise of deliverance for Israel and Judah contained in Jer. 30-31 was not proclaimed to the people, but was written down by the prophet at the Lord's command, in order to be thus preserved for the days to come. Just when these revelations of deliverance were received by the prophet is a question

in dispute. Some commentators suppose that they were received, in part at least, before the captivity began; yet Delitzsch concludes, in connection with Heb. 8, 7-13 where our text is quoted in full, that these predictions of a grand new era must be connected with the situation recorded in chapter 40, when Jeremiah was allowed to choose whether he would accompany the exiles into Babylon or remain with the remnant of the people left in Jerusalem and Judea. In the absence of any positive statement from the prophet himself the conclusion of Delitzsch is warranted. The chief point for us, however, is beyond question, and that is that our text treats the judgment of God as having already fallen upon obdurate Judah, even as upon Israel. Into the night of gloom and dismay, where all seems to be utterly lost, God sends his wonderful promise of deliverance. The astounding thing, however, is not so much the contrast between the judgment and the promise, but rather the vastness of this promise, one reaching far beyond the return of exiled Judah and Israel, even to the establishment of an entirely new covenant, a covenant that shall be final, perfect, all-enduring. The greatness of our text centers in the mention and description of *the New Covenant in the Coming Messiah, Christ Jesus*. It is a subject eminently fitting for the First Sunday in Advent.

31. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.

It is surely of vital importance for us to note that Jeremiah is here recording Jehovah's own words. Again and again he uses the formula: **saith the Lord**, and then puts down in direct discourse and in the first person, the Lord's own utterance. A count has been made of these formulas in the Old Testament introducing the Lord's words, and about 2000 of them are found ushering in a corresponding number of

statements, some of them very extended. If all these are blotted out, as not inspired and really spoken by Jehovah, then the prophetic sections of the Old Testament are completely wrecked, and the remainder is a gaping ruin without either real cause or real purpose. We may wonder how the Lord thus communicated his messages to Jeremiah and other prophets. The manner will never be known by us who have had no such wonderful experience. As for the prophets there never seems to be the slightest difficulty about Jehovah speaking his words to them, or their hearing and receiving those words. Shall not he who formed speech be able to use it for his purpose? And shall not he who created the mind and soul of man be able to use both for his communications? Can and dare we set limits to the Creator's powers of revelation? An utterance like the one contained in our text is certainly no "mechanical" affair. To be sure, it is clear, definite, down to the language employed, and so impressed upon the prophet's receptive mind that he is able, without hesitation or halting, to repeat it aloud, or to write it down in the actual words conveyed by the Lord. In a way it is certainly like a dictation from the Lord, and yet it is far and beyond anything as "mechanical" as human dictation. It is adequately described by the Lord himself when he says that he will put his words in the prophet's mouth. Faith is content with that; unbelief demands more, and shall not receive it. — The word LORD is written with capital letters in the Authorized Version whenever it is a translation for the Hebrew Jehovah or *Yahveh*, the God of the covenant. The word signifies: "I am that I am," in the sense of changeless, eternal, which is highly significant when brought into connection with the covenants of the Lord.

The exclamation: **Behold**, draws attention to the weight and importance of what Jehovah is com-

municating. It calls for all who hear or read to heed in true faith. — Four times we read: **the days come**, or more literally: “days are coming,” namely in 30, 3; 31, 27; our text; and 7, 32. Daechsel attempts to give these “days,” as well as the entire statement here made, a chiliastic coloring by asserting that the work of Christ is merely preliminary, as compared with the consummation which shall occur when the Jews as a nation are converted to Christ. The fallacy of this interpretation appears at once when we recall that the only new covenant of which we know was made on Calvary, and on Calvary alone; and this covenant, certainly, was not intended for the Jews alone, Acts 1, 8. The “days” here so significantly mentioned are the days when Jesus wrought out our redemption. The word **come** should be noted as an Advent term, since Jesus is constantly called the Coming One.

Now follows the great promise which is to rivet our attention: **that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.** Israel and Judah are here combined, and the term **house** pictures both kingdoms as families, each inhabiting its own dwelling or house. Chiliastic interpreters again stress this specific mention of the two Jewish kingdoms, which in fact runs through all these prophecies of deliverance. We are told this combination of Israel and Judah must mean the Jews as a nation, made one again, and brought finally as a nation to faith in their Messiah, in the days of the millennium. But what about the lost ten tribes who once constituted **the house of Israel**? Will they ever appear again, or be brought back again as “Israel,” i. e. the ancient northern kingdom? Most of those northern Jews disappeared after their exile, amalgamating with the Gentiles among whom they had been scattered. A few, mixed with Gentiles, formed the Samaritan people, so hateful to the real Jews in Christ’s day, and now

almost wholly gone. Still a few more mingled with the Judean Jews. A chiliastic conversion of the northern Jews as a nation is simply an impossibility, unless the dead be brought back again as the Russellites fancy. Moreover, the Scriptures know of no "new covenant" to be made only with Jews, or only with the Jewish nation. The redemption which Christ wrought embraces the world, and the covenant he established admits any and all who will come, from any nation, Matth. 28, 19; Mark 16, 16; Acts 10, 34-35. Once for all we must drop these Jewish dreams as in conflict with the Scriptures. They are supported only by an exegesis that dallies with fancies and impossibilities, invents its own interpretations, and ignores the plainest and most precious Gospel truths,

Let us note well that the new covenant was to be made **with the house of Israel**, as well as **with the house of Judah**, and the former is even mentioned first. In the matter of the new covenant both are treated alike, or rather as one. The fulfillment of the promise here given is not far to seek. Look at Jesus in Samaria; hear what he says to the woman at the well at Sychar: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." John 4, 21. Consider how the apostles labored in Samaria, Acts 8, especially 5, and 14-15. There you have the covenant "with the house of Israel." Then read the first chapters of the Acts and note how many Judean Jews were converted to Christ, and how the number constantly increased. Follow the labors of St. Paul in the synagogues of the diaspora, and note carefully all the questions treated in the Epistles as concerning Jewish and Gentile Christians during this entire era. Here is the new covenant "with the house of Judah." Now at last Israel and Judah are one again, spiritually one, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How this was we see clearly when we note the character of

the new covenant. It is not exclusive like the old, but inclusive. The new covenant was indeed with Israel and Judah, those with whom the first covenant had been made, but the very basis on which any Jew could come into this covenant was one which admitted any man of any nation equally with him. That basis was the forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus, v. 34. To be admitted into the old covenant Gentiles had to become Jews; to be admitted into the new covenant Jews had to cease to be Jews — they entered only as Christians, exactly like the Gentiles. It is wrong to spiritualize “house of Israel” and “house of Judah” to mean God’s children in general, the communion of saints in the Christian era. Those terms mean exactly what they say. Jeremiah is seeking to win and to comfort his own people, Jews, if you please. They needed it badly in those days of exile. He therefore makes no mention of the Gentiles in this place. Viewing thus the Scripture promise and its actual fulfillment the entire figment of a second specific Jewish covenant disappears completely. — The fact that the old Jewish nation as such was not converted by the missionary labors of Christ, the apostles, and others, and that the Jews as a mass are still outside of this covenant, in no way affects what God originally promised, and what in due course of time he performed. All this Jewish unbelief does not make the faith of God of none effect. The great Gentile world is also still far from the covenant. Let us not make this a question of numbers, but of God’s own Word, and of the work he has actually wrought.

The chief term in our text is the word **covenant**, Hebrew *berith*, translated in the LXX and in Heb. 8, 7-13 διαθήκη. It was given to Jeremiah to reveal the “new covenant” so fully, for which reason also his prophecy is quoted at length in Heb. 8. It is always the Lord who “makes” the covenant, not Israel or Judah, or any man. Therefore also the covenant is

always named after the Lord, not after Israel, Judah, or any man; it is "his holy covenant," Luke 1, 72; comp. *Eisenach Gospel Selections*, 2nd ed. I, 17. As far as men are concerned the covenant is made "with" them, and that is all. There is thus a great inequality between the parties to this covenant. In ordinary human contracts or covenants mutual obligations are assumed, so that there is a balance between them. In God's great covenant it is otherwise — he does the giving, men only do the receiving. On the one side there is grace with its gifts wholly unmerited; on the other side is guilt with its total unworthiness. As regards our faith and obedience after we have entered the covenant, let no man think of these as contributed on our part to match the gifts God contributes on his part. No; as regards this point the covenant is wholly one-sided; for all our faith and obedience is the product and outgrowth of the Lord's covenant, and never anything else. In commenting on Heb. 8, 8 Riegenbach points out that the author of this Epistle makes his own Greek translation of Jeremiah's Hebrew verb *karath*. He substitutes for the διατίθεσθαι of the LXX, συντελεῖν ἐπί. The latter says a little more than that the Lord **will make** or conclude a covenant, it declares that the Lord "*will accomplish*" or carry into effect (*zum Vollzuge kommen lassen*) his new covenant, wherefore also this covenant cannot fail. Note well that the entire action is one coming from the Lord alone, who also reveals in verses 33-34 how he will bring this promise about. — The Greek διαθήκη used in the New Testament for *b'erith* in our text really means "testament." Both of these terms agree in three points — like a testament this covenant of the Lord emanates wholly from its author, conveys precious gifts from him, and applies to certain designated persons. Thus the translation "testament" helps to describe the true nature of this gracious "covenant." — There remains the term **new**. The best

commentary on this is Heb. 8, 13: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." The newness of this covenant, then, does not consist in a mere repetition, as when an old worn out coat is replaced by a new one which presently will also wear out. Nor is this newness a mere increase, as if a garment of silk is substituted for one of cotton. No; the newness consists of something entirely different from the old. This covenant is new because it has what the old did not have at all, namely the incarnate Messiah himself, the final sacrifice for sin, and all the enduring results thus assured.

32. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord.

The old and the new covenant are now placed over against each other, so that the difference between them appears, and the full glory of the new covenant is brought to view by the contrast. There is first of all a full designation of the old covenant as "made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt." **Their fathers** are the forefathers of Israel and Judah, the entire people that left Egypt for Canaan. **In that day** can hardly be restricted to one day, either the one on which the people left Egypt, or the one when the Law was given on Sinai. The hiphil of the verb *chazaq* signifies to take hold of by the hand, to support firmly. So the Lord is here pictured as leading his people just as one takes hold of the hand of a child and supports it so that it may walk where otherwise it could not possibly go. This imagery is in line with the idea of the Lord's covenant, which must always be conceived as bestowing gifts and benefactions

through his gracious hand. The great gift here is deliverance from the intolerable bondage of **Egypt** by a gracious transfer into the freedom and joy of the promised Canaan. This is the mark of the old covenant here emphasized. It, too, is a covenant of deliverance. Let us hold that fast.

Sometimes the matter is misconceived. The covenant is identified with the imposition of *the Law*, either the entire Mosaic legal system, or in particular the Ten Commandments. By way of contrast the new covenant is then made to consist of *the Gospel*, the opposite of the Law. We are thus left under the impression that the only way of salvation open to the Jews in the old covenant was the perfect keeping of the Law, while now in the new covenant the way of salvation is through faith in the Gospel. A little thought ought to show us that this conception is certainly wrong, for then not a single soul could have been saved in the old covenant, all would have been lost — for where is there one man who can keep the Law? **Which my covenant they brake** (*'asher*, a relative pronoun, not the conjunction) dare not be read in the sense that the old Hebrew fathers did not keep the old legal system or the Ten Commandments. We know that Abraham was saved by the covenant God made with him, and Rom. 4 shows that this was not through his keeping of laws, but through his faith in the promised Redeemer. So also Moses himself, who led the Hebrews out of Egypt. So all the Old Testament saints down to Simeon and Anna, the shepherds at Bethlehem, and every other believer at the dawn of the new covenant. The old covenant, exactly like the new, required faith; the old, faith in the promise not yet fulfilled, the new, faith in the promise completely fulfilled. — The legal system of Moses did indeed distinguish the old covenant, so that we may name the covenant accordingly, but this old

covenant precedes the whole legal system of Moses by over 400 years, Gal. 3, 17, and itself consisted of promise and not of a set of legal requirements, Gal. 3, entire. If it had not been for this Gospel promise and its supreme interests, there would have been no giving of the Law at all. Through this promise, which required faith and faith alone, the old Israelites were saved. Rom 4, with Abraham and David, is clear on this point beyond the shadow of a question. — When the Lord says of the Hebrew fathers: **which my covenant they brake**, he does not mean that these people did not keep the requirements of the Sinaitic law perfectly, and thus were damned; he means that they refused to receive by faith the Gospel promise of the covenant. That is the cardinal point. Then of course, they also made light of the requirements of the Law, either by open idolatry and wickedness, Acts 7, 40-43, or by empty formalism and hypocrisy. So, indeed, they were lost. Yet even in the wicked days of king Ahab there were 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. In delivering the Hebrews out of the bondage of Egypt and bringing them to Canaan the Lord placed them in a position where in complete freedom from outward restraint they could worship the Lord by true faith in his great covenant promise, and permit themselves to be tutored and trained by the code of laws the Lord had given them. Instead of faith and obedience they met the grace of God by unbelief and disobedience, as “the fathers,” so also the children in ever growing measure. Read the tragic lamentations of Jeremiah on how the Lord’s word was treated in his day. Their cup of iniquity was filled, they had to be carried into exile for punishment. That exile was a type of the complete rejection which their nation would experience at the Lord’s hands, if after all warnings and preliminary punishments they would harden themselves in unbelief.

Since the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in the year 70 A. D. the Jews are in permanent exile, scattered among all nations. Those who dream of another return of the Jews to Palestine, similar to the return from Babylon, forget that now the old covenant is gone and the new covenant is come, with no fixed places like Canaan, Jerusalem, the Temple, no fixed ceremonies like the code of Moses, and no separate nation like the circumcised sons of Abraham, but with a grand people of God amid all nations, a Gospel of fulfillment with the door of faith open to Jew and Gentile alike, and the worship of the Father in spirit and in truth, in the complete liberty of that Gospel.

A problem turns up in the last clause of verse 32. Ed. Koenig, Kautsch and Weizsaecker, Keil, our own versions, and others translate: **although I was an husband unto them.** It is a question of the verb *ba'al*, the established meaning of which is "to take possession of," and by synecdoche *ehelichen*, or by metonymy "to take possession of as a husband, to rule, or to treat as a husband." Yet the LXX, the Peschito, Heb. 8, 9, Gesenius, Delitzsch, Riggenbach, and others hold to the Greek translation ἠμέλησα, "I ceased to care for them"; *ich habe mich von ihnen losgesagt.* Linguistically the former meaning must stand. It is gratuitous to claim, in defense of another meaning for which there is no language proof, that our text demands a clause stating that Jehovah rejected the fathers. Really that is a self-evident thought; those who break the covenant are out of it. The true meaning of the verb connects this final clause with the nature of the covenant. It was as when a husband keeps, protects, provides for, and shares all his possessions with a wife. This helps to bring out in typical Old Testament fashion the significance of breaking such a covenant: the wife, who ought to be true

to such a husband, leaves him and plays the harlot. This indeed was the very sin of the Israelites.*

33. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more.

We have already been told that the new covenant is for both Israel and Judah, hence the mention now of only **the house of Israel** must be received as an abbreviation. — The expression **after those days** refers to the days that must expire until the new covenant is ushered in. — Three great changes shall distinguish the new covenant and lift it above the old: one in regard to the Law; another in regard to teaching; and a third in regard to the forgiveness of sins.

In the old covenant the Law is said to be "set before" the people of Israel, Jer. 9, 13; Deut. 4, 8; 11, 32; etc., inasmuch as it contained a great number of outward regulations which had to be carefully observed. This shall be changed in the new covenant: **I will put my law in their inward parts.** Similarly the Law in the old covenant is described as written on tables of stone. Given to Israel as a nation even the strictly moral parts of the Law, as embodied in the Ten Commandments, appeared of necessity as a

* How the LXX came to translate as it did is impossible to say. The supposition that they read *ga'al* instead of *ba'al* is only a surmise. That Heb. 8, 9 retained the LXX translation need cause no surprise, since this clause is not vital for the arguments in Hebrews, and there are a number of similar instances where faulty LXX translations are allowed to pass.

code imposed from without. This, too, will be changed in the new covenant: I will **write it in their hearts**. The result shall be accordingly: where God had to disown so many of the Jewish nation on account of their disregard of the moral requirements and outward regulations imposed by the Law, not to mention the unbelief that lay back of this, he will most graciously acknowledge as his own all those who are won for the new covenant: **and I will be their God, and they shall be my people**.

Here is a beautiful Old Testament description of Christian sanctification in the narrower sense. It is the fruit of justification as the end of v. 34 shows. This doctrinal point must be held fast. Even in the new covenant the Law has its use, and here that part of its use is described which is usually summed up in the term *Regel*, the rule or norm of Christian life and conduct. We must of course say that it had the same use in the old covenant. And yet there is a great difference. Take as an example Zacharias and Elizabeth, Luke 1, 3: "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." That means that they had to keep, and did keep, their eyes on the great number of outward legal requirements "set before" them in the Mosaic code. All that is gone now. No longer does the Law hedge in one particular nation as God's people by a multitude of legal restrictions. No longer does it need to tutor and train that one nation for a great purpose. All this scaffolding of the old covenant, having served its purpose, has fallen away. In the Christian church the unchanging moral parts of the Law, defining the holiness without which no man shall see God, are directly implanted by the Spirit and Word of God in the hearts of believers, and thus constrain them to walk in God's ways. This is one of the distinct marks of the people of God in

the new covenant. Sanctified by his Spirit they are his people, and he is their God.

The second mark refers to teaching and knowledge: **And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, Know the LORD.** The evident implication is that this was the way in the old covenant, and that there was something inferior about it which should be superseded in the new. In endeavoring to determine what this inferiority was some have mentioned the mediation of prophet and priest during the Old Testament times, and that this has fallen away in the Christian Church. Yet the terms **neighbor** (really: "one," and "the other") and **brother** hardly apply to prophet and priest; moreover, we still have preachers and teachers divinely called to instruct us in the Word of God. So the difference can hardly lie on this plane. Some argue back from what is said of the new covenant: **for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,** including also the following clause on the forgiveness of sins. From this they conclude that in the Christian Church the knowledge of God is immediate and based on personal experience, and they assume that neither was the case in the old covenant. But is there a real difference along this line? Must we not all study and learn the Word, just like the Israelites of old? Is not our knowledge mediated just as theirs was? To our mind Langsdorff's assertion: "Each person comes of himself, from within, to the right knowledge," has a dangerous ring. Only certain fanatics make such claims. Again, did not the old Israelites have a personal experience of the Lord just as real as ours? Did this not include the experience of forgiveness, just as in our case? Psalm 32 and many other passages are surely clear on this point. So in spite of the commentators we cannot admit that the difference between the two covenants lies in the presence and the absence of

human mediation, or in the absence and the presence of personal experience.

When the Lord says: **they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, Know the LORD**, he describes an inferior method, and thereby implies a correspondingly inferior result; while on the other hand when he says: **they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them**, he does the reverse, he describes a superior method. The contrast between the covenants thus brought forward becomes clear when we note with what it deals. Through the extended days of the old covenant revelation was still in progress and not complete. From Moses on there were constant additions, as prophet after prophet appeared, and one revelation after another was added. Jeremiah himself, with the revelation in our text belongs to this line. The final prophet was the Savior himself, who brought the final revelation beyond which there can be none. And now we see what "neighbor" telling "neighbor," and "brother" telling "brother" means. How were the prophetic messages which came from time to time transmitted? Why, just as we are told. The prophet appeared perhaps in the Temple, and spoke the Lord's Word before a smaller or a larger assembly. Then those who heard it passed the Word on to the others. That is how the people as such learned what the prophet had spoken. So, for instance, it must have been with Jeremiah's own messages, and the symbolic acts which now and then he added, 19, 1; 24; 27, 2. Even the words and deeds of Jesus were at first circulated orally from one brother and one neighbor to another, John 1, 41 and 45; Matth. 9, 26 and similar statements. We have the record how the news of his resurrection was spread in just this way. To be sure there was also writing during the old covenant, yet let us not overlook significant facts like Chron. 34, 14, and in Jeremiah's case Jer. 36, 33.

There was finally also after the return from Babylon the compilation of the Old Testament canon, and the reading of sections of it in the synagogues that then sprang up. But even then the greatest revelation was yet to come; and the written records, from those of Moses on, in no way shut out the method of transmission reported in our text as characteristic for the times of the old covenant in general. — From the day of Pentecost on there was a marked change extending onward through the entire time of the new covenant up to the present day. Now revelation is complete. In all these centuries there has been no addition of any kind. Soon this complete revelation was fixed for all time in a final canon. No new prophetic messages have ever needed circulation during all these Christian ages. All the members of the new covenant have access to the entire Word of God, both by reading and by teaching. They are even able by means of this Word to test such preachers and teachers as they may have. Let us not overlook in the early days the catechumenate for beginners and children as **the least of them**, and the same kind of teaching down to the present day. And as for **the greatest of them** a mere reference is sufficient to the great array of sound theological teachers who have held high the great lamp of the Word. Here is the superiority of the new covenant — God's saving revelation complete at last, and by his own direction made accessible to all the members of his covenant. It is the fulfilment of the prophecy in our text, and of others like it, Is. 54, 13; 11, 9; Hab. 2, 14; Joel 2, 28; comp. John 6, 45; 1 John 2, 20 and 27.

The third mark of the new covenant consists of the forgiveness of sins. The statement is introduced by **for**, which shows that the former two marks depend altogether on this final and essential one. In other words, true holiness and knowledge are found only where there is pardon and forgiveness. The text,

of course, speaks of "the house of Israel" when placed in the new covenant. Yet all the members of that covenant, also those who are not of this "house," will bear the same mark. In every promise of forgiveness in the Scriptures, whether of the old or new covenant, both expiation, as well as contrition and faith, are always included, whether actually mentioned in some specific case or not. — Those who conceive of the old covenant as Law, and this resulting in transgression, and the new covenant as Gospel, thus filled with pardon, obtain a wrong, and actually a terrible contrast. For the fact is that the former would then be no true covenant at all — all who lived under it would be damned for ever. The truth is that the old covenant on God's part is as full of grace and forgiveness as the new: "And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah." Ps. 32, 5. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Ps. 103, 3. "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." Ps. 130, 3-4. All thoughts to the contrary ought to be brushed aside. Christ's expiation on the cross was just as effective for contrite sinners before Calvary as it is after Calvary. The difference on this point may be set down as minor. The difference between the covenants appears in the fact that the old was made with a nation, while the new is made with those who in any nation repent and believe in God, Acts 10, 35. Of the Jewish nation the bulk proved obdurate in spite of the gracious covenant God had made with them. When the Law was brought in on account of their transgressions, Gal. 3, 17 and 19, they disregarded even its threats and the judgments visited upon them. In the new covenant all this will be different. The true Israel, the real sons of Abraham, will accept the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and will also use the Law aright to live in daily contrition and repentance. Thus no past transgressions will be re-

membered against them. And the same thing is true of all others who from any nation come to be received into the new covenant. It is thus that the new covenant, as Heb. 8, 8 puts it in the Greek, shall be "accomplished." — Just what forgiveness consists in the Lord states clearly. The term translated **iniquity**, really signifies "guilt," *Schuld, Verschuldung*, and thus brings out the feature about **sin** that is vital in forgiveness: the guilt that deserves just punishment is pardoned. When the Lord declares: **I will forgive**, he tells us that this means: **I will remember their sin no more**. Not that the Lord arbitrarily forgives, or forgets, any man's sins. "Blessed is he . . . whose sin is covered." Ps. 32, 1. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Ps. 103, 12. Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Micah 7, 19. It is the atoning power of Christ's blood that covers, removes, and casts into the depths our sins; then they are gone for ever even from the mind and memory of God. That is divine forgiveness, and it fills the entire new covenant.

SUGGESTIONS

The evident subject of the text is *The New Covenant*. There is a comparison with the old covenant, but it would be a mistake to make the sermon a dissertation on the difference between the two covenants. The preacher must indeed know all about this difference, even as he must always speak from fulness of knowledge. His main purpose in preaching, however, must ever be to meet and satisfy the real spiritual needs of his hearers. For that purpose alone his abundant knowledge must be made fruitful. The real need of the hearer, as far as the present text is concerned, is to realize for his own person, as well as for others, the blessedness of living under the New Covenant. When the sermon brings this home to him, he will certainly be greatly profited by hearing it. Looked at in this way the idea of the New Covenant will be like an open portal leading into the substance of this text. This being so obvious, it will attract many preachers. "The New Covenant," however,

is nothing more than a subject, and as such too broad and indefinite for the construction of a sermon. The subject must be worked into some form of a proposition. That means that an arrow must be put into it, pointing the subject in a specific direction, the one we select as most profitable for our hearers; and at the same time lines of natural cleavage must be secured, so that we avoid any arbitrary sawing in two. A simple theme would be **Jeremiah's Description of the New Covenant**. The idea of a "description" will naturally call for a presentation of the main features or outstanding marks of this covenant. These we may gain by a simple analysis of what the text presents, thus producing what is called an analytical sermon. Jeremiah describes the New Covenant 1) as differing from the old; 2) as being wholly inward; 3) as furnishing knowledge to all; 4) as resting on the Lord's forgiveness. These divisions may be filed and polished into more attractive, interesting, and suggestive form. Since the first of these four points is general, we may weave it in with the other three: Jeremiah tells us that the New Covenant will be graced in a superior way by 1) holiness; 2) knowledge; 3) pardon. Instead of adhering to the order of thought as given in the text, thus building a purely analytic sermon, a re-arrangement may seem more desirable, which would result in a synthetical sermon. The re-arrangement here would obviously be one that substitutes a logical order of the main parts for the order as given in the text, and in this case the logical synthesis would simply reverse the parts: Jeremiah tells us that the New Covenant 1) delivers our souls (justification); 2) enlightens our minds (illumination); 3) directs and controls our hearts (sanctification). It would also be a fine logical synthesis to place the enlightenment first, the justification second, and the sanctification third: The New Covenant blesses us 1) with light; 2) with pardon; 3) with a new life. Whatever the arrangement we may choose, the material for each part would be drawn as fully as possible first from the text, and secondly from a combination of the text with the need of our people.

The text itself contains an excellent statement of just what the New Covenant consists in, and certainly this offers an attractive theme. We may shape it like this: **The Heart of the New Covenant: I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.** That means: 1) God makes us his own by forgiving our sins; 2) God leads us as his own by his gracious and holy Word. — Of course, other more attractive formulations can be found.

In these suggestions we have used the auxiliary concepts "description" and "heart" of the New Covenant. There are

other helpful concepts of this kind which may be used to light up the subject of the text. Here are a few: *The Glory* of the New Covenant—*The Priceless Treasures* of the New Covenant—*For the New Church Year* the New Covenant of *God's Grace*. The thought of our *need* is a simple concept of this kind, and we may join it to the thought of *the new Church Year*. Let us put it into question form: **Why do we need the New Covenant in this new Church Year?** I. Because of *the forgiveness* of sins which it offers us. a) What if we could not obtain this forgiveness? b) The joy and peace of having it. II. Because of *the knowledge* which it brings us. a) Our sad condition if we did not know the Lord. b) The joy and assurance of having the full measure of knowledge offered by the Word. III. Because of *the new heart* which it creates in us. a) The deplorable condition of a heart directed by its own sinful desires. b) The joy and blessedness of a heart made new by God's Spirit and directed by his will.—Our need is effectively shown by the negative and positive contrast used in developing each of the main parts. Many interesting, picturesque, and highly effective themes may be secured by using an auxiliary concept as indicated, and letting that concept shine consistently through all the parts.

An avenue into the text may be gained by using any one of its great thoughts as the gate-way. There are four of these gate-ways:

The Perennial Newness of our Covenant with God

- I. *Its fountain of forgiveness never ceases to flow.*
 - II. *Its light of divine knowledge never leaves us in doubt.*
 - III. *Its power to keep us in God's ways never gives out.*
-

Our Supreme Treasure in the New Church Year: The Forgiveness of Sins

- I. *Think of its value!*
 - II. *Appreciate its fruit!*
-

The Blessedness of Really Knowing the Lord

- I. *Knowing by our own experience his pardoning grace.*
- II. *Tasting by our own experience the excellence of his ways.*

What is wrong with the world of men to-day? Their hearts are devoid of God's Law, their inward parts are rotten with sin. What is the cure?

I will Put my Law in their Inward Parts

That means:

- I. *By his pardoning grace God frees us from the curse of sin.*
 - II. *By his sanctifying grace he makes us to know, love, and do his will.*
-

Beside these simpler forms of treatment more or less skilfully worked out, lies the broad field of visualizing the truth of the text from some angle of present need, as a result of intensive meditation and profound absorption of the text. Consider an illustration like the following:

As compared with the old covenant, the new reveals great *progress*, and men to-day are determined to be *progressive*, if anything. In religion this *progressiveness* is generally spurious, its advocates nothing but back numbers. Do not allow yourselves to be fooled. Distinguish clearly genuine up-to-date Christianity from its spurious shams. The prophet Jeremiah gives us a portrait of

The Genuine Up-to-date Christian

- I. He is past the point of mistaking *the religious notions of men for divine realities* (v. 34, the Word).
 - II. He is no longer deceived by *mere morality* as over against *a new life* (v. 33, the new obedience).
 - III. And he has left far behind *all schemes of saving himself* instead of trusting in *God's own pardon*.
-

Variable winds; treacherous currents. Religiously men are adrift; each steers by the compass of his own brain or the brain of someone else. Countless numbers are wrecked. Only one course is safe, that marked out by the compass which God has fixed for all time.

God's Compass for your Soul-Journey in the new Church Year

- I. *Nothing can take away sin but God's own pardon.*
- II. *Nothing can make you know God save his own revelation.*
- III. *Nothing can please God except the new heart which he himself creates.*

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Mal. 4, 1-6

The subject regularly set apart for this Sunday in the Church Year is *the Coming of Christ in glory and in judgment*. Our text from Malachi accords with that subject. Its second half, however, contains a prophecy concerning the coming and the work of John the Baptist, and thus touches the subject usually reserved for the Third Sunday in Advent. In fact, the text for this third Sunday, Is. 40, 1-8, brings us "the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness." It is certainly best to retain the old significance for each of these two Sundays, and therefore to subordinate the mention of the Baptist in our text to its more prominent subject, the great day of final judgment.

That the name "Malachi" designates an actual person who in his life bore that name, and recorded it, just like the other prophets, at the head of his written utterances, should not be doubted. It is safest to conclude that he lived and warned Israel during the days of Nehemiah, about 430 B. C. The great captivity was past, likewise the period of restoration under the direction of Ezra. Idolatry in the form of idol worship had been eradicated from among the Jews by the severity of the punishment they had experienced at the hands of God. Yet a wicked spirit remained and lifted its head. In our prophet's time this manifested itself in withholding tithes, in offering to the Lord polluted bread and blemished beasts, in again marrying heathen women, etc. On top of all this there was wicked talk, to the effect that even such miserable worship as was offered did not pay the worshipers, and that those who lived in haughty

rebellion, daring God to bring them to account, went unscathed, and were therefore called happy. This was by no means the old story of doubt and misgiving on the part of true believers at sight of the prosperity of the wicked, Ps. 73, the while they themselves were called on to suffer; it was the language of unbelief justifying and praising open disobedience. There were, of course, some "that feared the Lord," who in turn were also acknowledged by him. Compare 3, 13-17. This is the setting into which we must place Malachi and his prophecy concerning "the day that shall burn as an oven." Here we have the Lord's own direct answer to the wicked acts and words of the Jews of that day. Its sum is, that the Lord indeed makes a difference between those that are true and those that are false to him, and that this difference will appear in tremendous fashion when the great day of judgment arrives. The pertinence of this answer to our own times is at once apparent. There are many now who scorn the worship of the true God altogether, others who think that God must be satisfied with any worship they may accord him, and still others who see little tangible advantage in keeping up their worship, such as it may be. Blessed are we if we belong to the little flock that still fears the Lord, and are therefore counted in by him when he makes up his "jewels" (3, 17). Let us hear then how the last of the Old Testament prophets foretells, also for our warning, the judgment of the last day.

1. For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

The connective **for** indicates that the convincing proof is now offered for the assurance in 3, 18 that the godly shall indeed come to "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth

God and him that serveth him not." The final difference will simply be tremendous. In this life, while the patience and forbearance of God withholds judgment, the ungodly and wicked seem to fare as well as the godly and righteous, often even far better. That generally misleads the wicked themselves, and only too often disturbs those that fear the Lord. Read the complaint in Ps. 73, and how it is hushed in v. 18-20 where the end of the wicked is described. In our text the Lord does not stop at the point of death and the secret judgment pronounced by God on every man as he leaves this life. Tallying with this secret judgment is the public judgment which follows at the last great day, and in our text we are all bidden to **behold** that day, its mighty energy, and what that will effect. It is the Lord himself, who here tells us what shall then occur, he who himself will bring it to pass. The first verse describes what shall thus finally be done with the wicked, and the next two verses follow with a description of the final triumph of the godly.

The day cometh tells us that this day is now on the way. We must read the words as if that "day" were already a reality, like a traveller on the road, who shall presently arrive. Nowhere in the Scriptures does the Lord reveal the date of arrival. Any computation on our part is not only in vain, but worse, a practical denial on our part of what the Lord himself has told us Mark 13, 32; Luke 21, 35; Matth. 24, 50; 1 Thess. 5, 1-3; Acts 1, 7. The verb "cometh" has an Advent tinge, fitting the season for which this text is chosen. — For the wicked that day **shall burn as an oven**. *Tannur* signifies an oven for baking, not a furnace for melting metal. One wonders why this comparison is chosen, and not a simple reference to fire in general. Usually commentators repeat the notion of Hengstenberg, that an oven points to a hotter fire, one more intense than a free or open

fire. Yet this is evidently a mistake, since an oven for baking is never heated to the highest degree; to convey that thought the figure should name a blast-furnace for melting or refining metal. The true reason for the comparison here used lies in the further reference to the fuel which shall be fed into this oven, namely *qash*, **stubble**, gathered from the field when the harvest is over. Such fuel would not do for a smelting furnace, while an oven for baking could be made hot enough by being fed with wads of stubble. Matth. 6, 30: "the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven." In a country where fuel was scarce, stubble would naturally be thus utilized, or for that matter dried grass and weeds.—The fuel for the oven is now described: **and all the proud, etc.** In *kol-zedim*, "all proud ones," *zed* is metaphorical: "boiling over," and points to the excessiveness that lies in being proud and haughty over against God. Note how the term goes back to the previous mention of "the proud," who were falsely praised as "happy" in 3, 15. Fine happiness that ends like burning stubble! The pride here meant goes with godlessness, and is a characteristic mark of it. The humble bow before God, obey his Word, and accept his chastening; the godless scorn to do this. Pride here refers to the heart and its thoughts, and, of course, includes the attitude that goes with such a heart.—The addition: **yea, and all that do wickedly**, does not name a second class of men, as if there were two, but describes "the proud ones" by pointing to their characteristic actions. These men with haughty hearts do wicked works. In *kol-'oseh rishah*, the *kol* combines the whole number as one mass, while the singular *'oseh* points to each individual in the mass as one that did wrong (*Frevel*) in flagrantly disobeying the Lord. To "do wickedly" is the opposite of *ts'daqah*, "righteousness," in harmony with the divine norm or rule of right. Compare

again 3, 15, where blind human judgment "set up" and elevated those "that work wickedness." Fine elevation that ends in burning and ashes! The double characterization here used is repeated by St. Paul in Rom, 1, 18, and on through the first part of the Epistle, when he joins together ἀσέβεια (godlessness) and ἀδικία (unrighteousness) in describing the sinfulness of men. — In our passage we have the Lord's own description of all who reject his Word and grace. All unbelief has in it the haughtiness toward God here mentioned and combined with that and an outgrowth of it, the wickedness that disobeys the divine norm. Sometimes both characteristics come openly into view, as among the Jews in Malachi's time, yet when they do not flaunt themselves so brazenly, both are nevertheless present, merely being veiled. The lion of unbelief and sin may look very innocent while he sleeps; prod him with the stick of the Law, and he will rave and roar. — The men thus described **shall be** for the oven of judgment **stubble, qash**, gathered after the harvest, and good for nothing more.

The entire first half of verse 1 is now repeated with some variations and additions. The repetition is a form of strong emphasis, and the additions intensify the statement still more. Once more, like a doleful refrain, we hear: **and the day that cometh, dies irae, dies illa**. But now we are told that this day **shall burn them up**. This retains the figure: "the day" is the "oven," yet there is a significant change. In the first half of the verse we see the hot oven with a fire kindled in it (the day), and piled beside the oven the stubble for fuel (all the proud and wicked). Now we see the stubble thrust into the oven and consumed by the kindled fire. *Lihat*, the piel of *lahat* (burn up), is causative: to make something flame up, or flare up with flames, and thus fits closely the quick burning of stubble in an oven.

At this point the parenthetical: **saith the LORD of hosts**, is inserted, for the threats here uttered are entirely his. On the term LORD compare the previous text. "I AM THAT I AM," Ex. 3, 14, is well defined in Mal. 3, 6: "For I am the LORD, I change not." Elohim denotes God's almighty power, who is absolutely able to do what he wills; Jehovah connotes his covenant relation, and thus his unchangeable faithfulness in keeping his promises. Jehovah is the Personal God in covenant with his people, manifesting boundless grace, righteousness, and faithfulness to his word. The correlative of Elohim is man, of Jehovah, redeemed man. Elohim is God in nature, Jehovah, God in grace. Elohim is the God of providence, Jehovah the God of promise and prophecy. Hence the prophets' formula is always: "thus saith Jehovah," not Elohim. — The addition: **of hosts**, *ts'ba'oth*, refers to his ownership and control of the hosts of heaven, angels and stars, and thus implies his command of boundless resources. In a passage like ours, speaking of flaming wrath and judgment, the emphatic reminder that the speaker is "the Lord of hosts" is eloquent of the covenant broken and repudiated by faithless men, who for this very reason shall find the God of the covenant and all the hosts under his command against them.

We may read *'asher* as a conjunction: **that**, "so that it shall leave them" etc., or as a relative referring to the Lord: "*who* shall leave," etc. There seems to be no way to decide. The judgment of the last day shall be final and complete, for it **shall leave them neither root nor branch**. The new figure pictures a blasted tree, yet it retains the central idea in "stubble," which when gathered for the burning also has neither root nor top left. — The fate of the wicked shall thus be utter destruction. The followers of Russell, the so-called International Bible Students, interpret this as complete annihilation — the wicked

shall cease to exist, shall be relegated to "oblivion." Hence, too, they claim there is no hell with unquenchable fire. The trouble with this doctrine is that it flatly contradicts the plainest statements of Scripture which not only mention, but describe hell and damnation, and assert the eternal existence of the damned in hell in terms identical with those used of the eternal existence of the blessed in heaven. On hell we mention only Matth. 25, 41 and 46; Luke 16, 23-24; Rev. 20, 10 and 14-15. The figures in our text have nothing whatever to do with the question of existence or non-existence of body and soul of the damned, but picture the final condition of the ungodly in strongest possible contrast to their one-time proud and lofty estate: once "proud" — now "stubble"; once "set up," 3, 15 — now "neither root nor branch" left; once acclaimed "happy" — now "ashes" under sole of foot, v. 3. Thus the text itself guards us against false deductions.

2. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. 3. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.

These two verses balance exactly the two halves of the foregoing verse. Each of those halves has two striking statements, four altogether. In the same manner there are four statements in verses 2 and 3, grouped in two pairs. And to the promises, just as to the threats, there is added as a seal of verity the assurance that thus "saith the Lord of hosts."

The Hebrew begins with the verb: but there **shall arise the Sun of righteousness.** The picture is that of a sunrise after a long and dreary night. We may think of the night as all this earthly life in which so many of the wicked stand up proudly, and the godly bear many a cross. So many things are wrong, so little can be righted, and we are often most

painfully involved, suffering the wrong in utter helplessness. Then we are troubled, often yielding to doubt, and God's ways seem dark. But this night shall end at last. There shall be a glorious sunrise, ushering in a wonderful, eternal day. **The Sun of righteousness**, *shemesh tz'daqah*, carries a capital letter in the A. V., because it is read as a personal designation for Christ. In reality "righteousness" (after the st. const. *shemesh*), as an appositional genitive, defines "sun." In other words, the "sun" that shall arise at the last day is "righteousness" itself. The full, complete, and everlasting righteousness of the Lord of hosts shall blaze forth in all its radiance, nevermore to be dimmed by any intervening cloud or fog.

And this glorious righteousness shall arise **unto you that fear my name**, saith the Lord. Here we must carefully note, that **name**, so constantly used of the Lord in both Testaments, signifies much more than a mere personal designation such as we use for individual men and creatures. The Lord's name is his revelation by which he makes himself known to us. Thus by means of his name he draws nigh unto us, and enables us to come into living and personal contact with him. The Lord's name is the door he has made for us, by which we may enter in, and commune with him. Thus the "name" is the Word of God as our great means of grace. Of course, it includes every revealed personal title of God, at the same time, however, every utterance of God by which he tells us who he really is. This "name" reaches out to our hearts in order to awaken confidence and faith in us. Knowing and trusting God by means of his "name" we rejoice in it and prize it in the highest degree, for by it we actually have God and all the blessedness that lies in him. — To **fear** that name, *yare'*, cf. *yir'ah* and *yir'ath*, never means to be afraid of it, but always to reverence and stand in awe of it.

The opposite of this fear is the pride and wickedness mentioned above. Compare this contrast in 3, 13-18. To fear the Lord's name is thus to recognize in our hearts both its wonderful greatness and glory, and its grace and blessedness for us. Only the children of God have this fear, and they show that they have it when for all the world they would not dishonor that name or put themselves in opposition to it. The fear of the Lord is the expression alike of faith and love. It is a grave mistake to think that the Old Testament saints feared the Lord with a kind of dread, and that this characterized their religious life, while in the New Testament love has superseded this fear. That notion is probably derived from our English conception of "fear," as this is used in translation for the Hebrew term, and thus came to be carried into the Scriptures, discoloring their meaning in our minds. When Christians are told not to "fear," the verb φοβέω means to be frightened, and that indeed does not comport with faith. Yet that the same humble reverence of God should fill our hearts as filled the hearts of the Old Testament saints is clearly shown by many New Testament statements: Acts 10, 2 and 22; 10, 35; 13, 16; etc.; Col. 3, 22; Heb. 11, 27; Rev. 11, 18; 14, 7; 15, 4; 19, 5. The more frequent use of the word "fear" in the Old Testament is due to the Hebrew idiom which favored this concept when dealing with true believers and worshippers and their attitude toward God.

It is for those "that fear the name of the Lord," and for them alone, that **righteousness** shall rise like the morning sun at the last day. They shall receive the fullest and completest vindication for having continued in the fear of the Lord, as over against all the proud and wicked. This forensic idea lies at the bottom of the term. The "righteousness" of the Lord is the unvarying agreement of all his words and acts with the highest norm of right. It is the very nature

of God never for an instant to deviate from that norm. The norm itself is the inwardness of his being. The righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel is God's verdict of pardon and forgiveness pronounced upon faith in Jesus Christ, "unto all and upon all that believe," Rom. 3, 21-22. Man is "righteous" when the verdict of the great Judge is in his favor. "Therefore, we believe, teach, and confess that our *righteousness* before God is, that God *forgives us our sins* out of pure grace, without any work, merit, or worthiness of ours preceding, attending, or following." F. C., 501, 4. In our text the divine righteousness rising like the morning sun is pictured as the ultimate hope of all true believers. When that righteousness shall speak its final great verdict it will uphold the cause of these believers against every contrary judgment, graciously acquitting them of all guilt for Jesus' sake, honoring and accepting the fruits of their faith, and striking down finally and forever all the arrogance of their foes who made their lot painful in countless ways. We may indeed say that the embodiment of this "righteousness" will be in the Son of man when he comes to judgment, even as the full exposition of "the sun of righteousness" and its shining forth is recorded in Christ's own description of the judgment, Matth. 25, 31-46. In this earthly life of ours the righteousness of God never comes to view fully, being restrained by the continued working of grace, and sometimes, when the wicked triumph with greatest boldness, there seems to be no righteousness of God at all. These shadows, this darkness and night shall completely disappear at the last day.

The first and immediate effect is directly connected with the revelation of the Lord's righteousness: **with healing in his wings**, literally: "and healing by means of his wings." The term **healing** should not make us think of a slow process which gradually removes hurts and evils. The healing will come at

once, like the perfect restorations in the miracles of Jesus. The **wings** of the sun are its rays, spread afar like mighty pinions. The preposition *b^e* makes these "wings" the means of healing, which is a different thought entirely from that of a hen's wings sheltering her chicks. The healing energy is wholly divine, working a perfect change on the last day. The rays of the sun of righteousness are like the six wings of the cherubim, spread in all directions, not merely horizontally like those of a bird.

Healing brings joy, a mediate effect. The healing is objective, the joy subjective: **and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall**, literally: "gallop about as calves" etc. This striking comparison does not refer to calves shut in during the winter months, and let out in the spring, but to young cattle tied up for fattening, and only occasionally loosed, then however capering about in joy. The verb *push* does not mean "grow up" or "increase," as some have translated it, but to gallop and caper about. The *tertium comparationis* is simply joy, pictured by the released young cattle disporting themselves in the pasture field. Even the sermon writer should resist the temptation, to which some exegetes give way, of extending the point of comparison, allegorizing the "stall," the tying up, and the seasons of confinement and of release.

The third verse states the final effect of the great day, the one connected with the once proud and wicked. They are summarily mentioned as the **wicked**, whom now the godly **shall tread down**, '*asas*, crush by treading. This cannot mean that the godly shall help judge and condemn the wicked, or that they shall carry the judgment of the wicked into effect, for the wicked shall already be **ashes**, which means that their judgment and condemnation is already complete. Nor can this "treading down" mean that the godly shall rule in triumph over the wicked during

a thousand years, as chiliasts interpret the expression, for this idea is altogether foreign to the figure of "ashes." It is really ludicrous to picture the calves as pawing the ashes, the way cattle often paw and hurl, not ashes, but dust over themselves, for the ashes lie under **the soles of your feet**, which does not mean hoofs, but human feet. The point of comparison in "ashes" lying under the soles of feet is the idea of utter, final *defeat and abasement*. The pride and wickedness which once rose so imposingly and seemed to control the world, is all blasted now for ever, burned to ashes. Ex. 14, 13 may serve as an example. We have the thought without figure in Dan. 4, 37: "And those that walk in pride he is able to abase." Job 40, 11: "Behold every one that is proud, and abase him." Eze. 21, 26: "Exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high." Read the well-known passages Matth. 23, 12; Luke 14, 11; 18, 14. — And now, just as the prophecy regarding the judgment of the wicked was sealed with the Lord's own name, so the prophecy concerning those that fear his name: **saith the LORD of hosts**, he who commands all the heavenly hosts, and who will most assuredly keep his covenant promise to all who fear his name.

4. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

There is little use to argue about the closeness of the connection of verse 4 with what precedes, whether that be the entire book of Malachi, or only the last section on the coming day. The simple fact is that this brief and comprehensive admonition is in place in either case. The question who is addressed here, whether the godly alone (v. 2) or all the Jews, is certainly answered by a glance at verse 5. The Baptist was sent to the entire nation. The fact that so many of that nation would persist to the very end in pride and wickedness in no way stopped God's con-

tinuous efforts in trying to turn them from their evil ways. Matth. 23, 37. — So God's voice cries through the prophet's mouth: **Remember ye the law of Moses my servant.** The remembering here meant is one not of the memory only, but of the heart, an effective remembering producing the obedience of faith. **Moses** is significantly called **my servant**, first because he was the instrument chosen by God for conveying the Law to all Israel, and secondly because God wanted the Israelites to know that this was his own Law, not merely that of Moses. They were dishonoring and challenging God himself when they disobeyed the Law of Moses. Compare here 3, 5-9. It is best to refer *'asher* to "Moses my servant" instead of to *Thorah*. The verb *I commanded (tsavah)* has two objects, Moses (the person) and "statutes and judgments" (the thing), to which is added, by means of *al*, **all Israel**, i. e. the entire people throughout all ages, as those to whom the *Thorah* applied. Translate: "to whom I commanded at Horeb for all Israel statutes and judgments." If, however, *Thorah* is made the antecedent (which can be done), then **statutes and judgments** are read as appositions to the relative. These two terms, in any case, elucidate **the law of Moses**. *Chuqqim* (that which is engraved) are the divine principles embodied in the Law. They are established by the Lord for his people, and should be so received by them in humble, trustful submission. *Mishpatim* are the Lord's decisions (verdicts, and thus norms) as to right and wrong in his sight. Against these the people should never set themselves by acts of disobedience, and from them they should never deviate in their conduct. A careful reading of Ps. 119 will aid us in understanding these two terms, as well as their synonyms. All that God gave to Moses at Horeb is thus once more brought to the remembrance of Israel. — **Horeb** is the particular peak from which the Law was given, while Sinai is

the central mountain mass from which this peak rose. Israel camped on Sinai, but Moses alone ascended Horeb.—The danger is that, following the commentators, we read the divine injunction here given as demanding nothing but a legal obedience to the Law. This sort of exegetical tradition, one commentator simply copying the thought of another, deserves the severest kind of rebuke. No man on earth could possibly render an obedience of that kind, and any attempt at offering it to God would only anger him. In Christ's day, when that sort of obedience was attempted, it produced Pharisaism, against which Christ hurled his terrible "woes." Its product was "law-works," ἔργα νόμου, minus the Gospel and faith, and completely opposed to both, as St. Paul demonstrated again and again. The call to remember the *Thorah* must be read in the true sense of the prophets: "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." Ps. 103, 17-18. The basis is always the covenant, with its Gospel, and faith. That includes all the mercy of God together with his righteousness, which is his blessed verdict of pardon on every believer. Where this covenant is held by faith there follows childlike obedience to the statutes and judgments of the *Thorah*, its moral, ceremonial, and civil requirements. There the Lord's call: "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant!" is ever joyfully answered: "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Ps. 119, 32. And where this obedience falls short, there is contrition and repentance, and the Lord's pardon, as Ps. 32 and scores of passages show. The legal system to which the Lord had bound Israel dare never be dissociated from the old covenant, established 430 years (Gal. 3, 17) prior to the giving

of the Law, and that covenant was one of unmerited grace and mercy culminating in the Messiah in the fulness of time.

5. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: 6. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

The connection is quite obvious: Elijah shall come and do his work before the day of judgment arrives. Here we should note well one of the marked features of prophecy as to the interval of time between events. There is no time perspective; everything is foreshortened. Two events, with many centuries between, are viewed in prophecy as merely following each other. It was thus with the Babylonian captivity and the coming of the Messiah; especially with the first and second coming of Christ; and with Christ's own prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, Matth. 24. This is because it is not for us to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power, Acts 1, 7. In all these prophecies the time interval is apparently ignored. The Baptist sees Jesus in his grace and in his glory, at the day of Pentecost (baptizing with the Holy Ghost) and at the day of final judgment (gathering the wheat, burning the chaff), Luke 3, 16-17. It all seems one composite picture. So our text states simply that Elijah shall come first, and the day of judgment thereafter — how long after, the Father alone knew, and knows to-day, although centuries have already passed. This disposes of Keil's claim, that the prophets knew only of *one* coming of Christ, and that with the Incarnation of the Logos the judgment began for Israel and for the world. It is all too plain from our text that the day that shall burn as an oven has not yet come. Moreover, even the

greatest preliminary judgments, like the destruction of Jerusalem and other world calamities, while miniature types of the final judgments, are not yet that judgment itself.

Behold marks the promise now made as a notable one. The identity of the **Elijah** whose mission is here foretold is beyond doubt, Luke 1, 17; Matth. 17, 12; 11, 14. This is the Baptist, the herald of the Messiah. Two things lie in the name here applied to him: the times when he shall appear shall be like those of King Ahab, when the first Elijah wrought — Israel shall have turned from the Lord, with only a remnant of true believers left; and like the first, the second Elijah shall be a stern prophet, both in his bearing and his message. — **Before** (literally: “in front of”) **the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD**, refers to the order of the events: Elijah first, “the day” second. There is a further relation between the two: Elijah’s work shall be a call to prepare for that day: “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance . . . and now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees,” etc. Matth. 3, 8-10. — We have already had a sufficient description of the day of judgment, so now it is summarily called “the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” It shall indeed be **great**. There is no other day like it, when time shall merge into eternity, when the whole human race shall simultaneously appear before the Lord, and when all the countless millions of men shall each individually receive judgment from the Lord. The human mind cannot grasp that “day.” Only now let us admit it, and not bring in our clocks to reckon hours in human fashion, and compute averages, how long it shall take to judge each person. All this is folly, just as is the effort to measure out the place of the judgment, where there shall be room for all these countless millions, so that each shall see and hear the Judge. Just admit it: some things go beyond the limits of our mind. The

Hebrew participle *nora'*, from *yare'*, **dreadful**, "feared," has reference to the wicked, and plainly points back to verse 1. For them to "fear" is always "to be afraid of"; not so for the godly, their "fear" of the Lord is always to be childlike, and turns to dread only when they forget their godliness. Note how in the old gospel text for this Sunday Jesus pictures the coming judgment for the godly as the approach of spring, Luke 21, 28-31.

The hiphil *heshib* (from *shub*) signifies: "to make return," to restore. That **he shall turn** the hearts of the fathers and of the children to each other is to be regarded as the sum of the entire work of the second Elijah, rather than merely an incidental part of it. We see this at once when we compare Luke 1, 17, where the angel Gabriel uses our passage in announcing to Zacharias the birth of his great son. We therefore dismiss the interpretation that John's great work should consist in removing family troubles between fathers and sons in Israel, as both trivial and beside the mark. Nor can we agree that **the heart of the fathers** refers to the old godly patriarchs of Israel, long dead and gone, while **the children** are the people of the Baptist's own day. How could the work of John affect in any way men long dead? And what justification is there for making the "fathers" godly and the "children" ungodly? The entire matter becomes plain when we examine the use Gabriel makes of Malachi's prophecy. John's work shall be "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," and thus "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." The key to Malachi's words is thus given us: John shall turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. "The disobedient" may be the fathers or older people, they may also be the children or younger people. In Malachi's prophecy there lies the assurance that when John comes to perform his

task *some* fathers, and also *some* children in Israel, shall be found possessing "the wisdom of the just," namely the Gospel of grace which makes men just in God's sight. And John's task shall be to turn all disobedient fathers and children back to this pardoning and justifying Gospel wisdom. As in the days of Ahab 7000 had remained true, so in the days of the Baptist a chosen remnant shall again be found, some younger in age, some older. We know the sons of Zebedee, James and John, young men of 20 years or a little over, and Simeon and Anna, both venerable in years. They shall constitute the nucleus, and to them the second Elijah shall add as many as possible in true faith and godliness, making ready thus "a people prepared for the Lord," i. e. the Messiah. The **heart** is mentioned because true repentance is a matter of the heart, and no mere outward reformation can ever suffice. Repentance, too, is always an individual matter, yet it is the Lord's will that parents and children shall unite in following the wisdom of the just. The Gospel constantly travels along these avenues of intimate natural relationships. Note the touch "*their* fathers," pointing in this direction.

A terrible threat is contained in the final clause, based on the possibility that the hearts of the people may after all not "turn," but harden themselves against both Law and Gospel. This threat recalls the curse of the Canaanites, Deut. 20, 17 etc. If ever Israel should follow a course like that of the Canaanites, their fate would be hers, Deut. 12, 29 etc. The two verbs **come and smite** belong together. The coming shall be when the smiting is to take place. **The earth** here refers to the land of Israel, not to the entire globe. And *cherem* is "ban," or **curse** in the sense of anathema, involving *Vernichtung* or complete destruction, Lev. 27, 28 etc.; Deut. 13, 16 etc. This curse did descend upon the Jewish land. When neither the Baptist nor Jesus himself were able to

break the disobedience of the Jews, Matth. 11, 16-24, the *cherem* descended as a smiting blow. Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Jews driven out. To this day the land that once flowed with milk and honey has not recovered.

SUGGESTIONS

The real subject of the text is *The Day of Judgment*. Whatever else it contains is subordinate to this grand topic. In formulating a theme for the text this subject must be narrowed down to fit as closely as possible what the text actually presents regarding it. A very simple way is, to proceed as in the previous text, by introducing a formal limitation: **Malachi's Great Prophecy Concerning the Final Judgment**. This permits us to follow a simple analysis of the text. 1) The *condemnation* of the wicked; 2) The *salvation* of the godly; 3) In the light of both the *Lord's call* to us to prepare. This treatment, however, is little more than a formal logical arrangement for preaching purposes. It is a case of simple bread, wholesome indeed, but without trimmings. If the elaboration rises no higher the sermon may be cold and dry, mere matter-of-fact. — Instead of using a formal limitation, we may try to narrow down the content of the subject itself, to make it correspond as exactly as possible to just what is in the text, then adding the propositional form, or its equivalent, needed for the idea of the theme. Our text study helps us here, for Malachi deals with the final judgment as showing that the Lord will indeed make a difference between the righteous and the wicked. So our theme may be: **The Great Difference at the Last Day**. This will be easy to introduce when we draw from the context how in this present life the wicked often seem to have the best of it, and how it does not seem to pay to fear God, stick to his Word, and walk in his ways. Christians indeed are often called foolish, and sometimes seem so to themselves. The difference, the real and eternal difference is so often clouded and covered over. But it is true, always there, and so tremendous that we are all going to be overwhelmed when it comes out at last. Here is what the Lord himself tells us about it. — With the theme thus introduced we may stick to the original analysis of the text into three pieces. The formulation may vary, as we may prefer assertion, interrogation, exclamation, or some combination of these. Here is assertion: The great difference comes to view 1) In the flaming oven that

shall burn at the last day; 2) In the Sun of righteousness that shall shine at the last day; 3) In the Law and Gospel, now preached to us, and carried into full effect at the last day. A formulation like this keeps some of the color and imagery of the text, always an attractive and enriching feature.— Short-sighted. Do not look beyond their own noses. Blind, perhaps. See it too late. **Look now with Malachi at the Last Great Day!** 1) Take a look into that oven that shall burn at the last day. 2) Take a look up at the Sun of righteousness that shall shine at the last day. 3) Take a look right into your own heart and what is there preparing against the last great day. This formulation is exclamatory, using imperatives. As regards verses 4-6 of the text, it would be perfectly in order to combine what is here furnished with the first two parts, thus attaching a solemn warning to part one, and a gracious call and invitation to part two, making two parts suffice.— Stoecker's outline, very terse and compact, belongs to the group here illustrated: **The Day of the Lord** (in the sense: What kind of a day is the day of the Lord?): 1) A day of wrath. 2) A day of grace. 3) A day of decision.

As regards auxiliary concepts to lend color, and attractiveness to the subject when welded into a theme, we suggest first of all the *Advent* idea. Beginning with the redemptive Advent (Christ's first coming) one may naturally advance to the judgment Advent, and speak of **Malachi's Prophecy Concerning the Judgment Advent**. That prophecy 1) Contradicts what foolish men presume; 2) Declares the realities that actually shall come; 3) Bids us prepare in faith and obedience.— There is also the idea of a *message*, since the entire text is actually a message for you and me: Thus saith the Lord of hosts. We may divide by stating the main parts of the message, perhaps by only indicating their contents, so as to arouse interest. If we apply the categories: what— for whom— why, this must be skilfully done and the color afforded by the text should be conserved.

A synthetic treatment of this text is less obvious, yet, although requiring as always more skill, the result is often worth the effort. The thoughts found in the text are arranged to form a new and possibly striking pattern, one suggested by the theme and, of course, unfolding it in a natural way. We may say that instead of viewing the flowers as they grow in the bed, we gather and arrange them in a lovely bouquet, and set them in an appropriate vase. Perhaps the following may prove suggestive. **The Heralds of the Lord's Judgment Day:** 1) *Moses* pointing to the Law; 2) *Elijah* calling to repentance; 3) *Malachi* declaring the final verdicts.— The set fashion of

having only two or at most three parts in an outline is really a mannerism, a species of homiletical narrowness. Selecting a number of salient features we may arrange the following:

☛ **The Greatest Day the World Will Ever See.**

- I. *Curse and blessing now already point to it.*
- II. *Moses and Elijah have warned us of it.*
- III. *No parent or child but what shall face it.*
- IV. *Stubble and ashes shall be the terror of it.*
- V. *Healing and joy shall rise as the glory of it.*

For the first part use the last clause of the text and the destruction of Jerusalem. Quandt has the following on "stubble": "Look at the proud, despising their Creator like their Redeemer, like the Spirit of God. They have never been concerned to heed God's pleading, to consider his commandments worth keeping, to prize the sending of his Son. They have received all the visitations of God, the kind as well as the bitter, with indifference and unbelief. Purposely they have allowed all opportunities of approaching God to pass by. They have made a mental idol of him, a God who is not the God of Revelation, but a wretched invention of their own devising. On the smoldering fire of their conscience they poured water and wine and pleasure and song and lies to quench it. Do you ask for the fruits of their life—there are none. Even when they do what looks like fruit and is counted as such by human eyes, it is worthless before the penetrating eyes of God, because the motives back of it are evil. Perhaps they seem charitable, but they want the praise of men. Or they seem churchly, but their eye is on earthly advantage. Or they appear moral, but secretly their hearts are adulterous, etc. Now comes the day that brings to light the real contents of all preceding days. Then the wicked will be straw, rootless, dried out, threshed-out straw, just as all their enjoyments and lusts will seem like straw to them, although they had counted them worth more than God. Then neither root nor branch will be left to the dead brambles."

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Is. 40, 1-8

This is the Sunday of John the Baptist and his great Advent call: *Prepare!* No finer text could be chosen from the Old Testament for this Sunday than the opening words of the great second half of Isaiah, for here by means of prophecy the great voice itself crying in the wilderness is made to ring in our ears.

Isaiah began his prophetic career about 754 B. C. in king Uzziah's reign; it ended when king Manasseh sawed his living body asunder with a wooden saw (Palestinian Targum on 2 Kgs. 21, 16). The Babylonian exile began 560 B. C. The entire first half of Isaiah's book (39 chapters) is epitomized in 1, 9: "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." The judgment of exile for Israel is fixed. In chapter 39 the prophet declares that everything "shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord." On this great first half of the book, as on a mighty pedestal of judgment, rises the wonderful second half, which begins with chapter 40. In prophetic vision Isaiah now describes the future glory of the true Israel. There are three revelations, each rising a step higher, like the section of a golden tower: first the deliverance from Babylon through Koresh or Cyrus (40-48); next, the deliverance of the world through Christ (49-57); finally, the eternal deliverance in the world to come (58-66). Exactly in the center, with 13 chapters on either side, is the heart of the whole message — chapter 53. Our text opens this line of prophecies. Here Isaiah sees Israel in the long

wretchedness of the Babylonian exile. In chapters 40-42 there sounds the first strong note of comfort: The Lord is coming in the Glory of His Power unto His People — Let Them Prepare! The eight verses of our text ring with this proclamation — a genuine Advent theme.

1. **Comfort ye, comfort ye me people,
saith your God.
Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem,
and cry unto her,
that her warfare is accomplished,
that her iniquity is pardoned:
for she hath received of the Lord's hand
double
double
for all her sins.**

We are here reading the most perfect Hebrew poetry. The entire second half of Isaiah is cast in this form. There is first of all a correspondence in the lines (plus the thoughts they convey), the so-called *parallelismus membrorum*, two or more lines in parallel structure, sometimes synonymous, again antithetical, and still again synthetical or progressive. In verse 1-2 of our text the first two lines are synonymous, likewise the next two. A larger or a smaller group of such parallel lines forms what may be termed a stanza in Hebrew poetry. A group of such stanzas constitutes a unit, in forming one part of a prophetic address; and several of these units comprise the entire address. We see at once the artistic beauty of this structure. — The entire second half of Isaiah is arranged in triads. There are three great revelations, as we have already pointed out, and each of these three is again divided into three, making nine, and each of these nine has three parts, making in all twenty-seven — $3 \times 3 \times 3$. Each minor triad, however, is built up in its own way. We have the first of

these minor triads in chapter 40, composed of two units, 1-11 and 12-31, with four rather short stanzas in the first unit, three of these stanzas forming our text, namely 1-3; 3-5; 6-8, and omitting the fourth, 9-11.

The second half of Isaiah has no introduction. In a highly dramatic manner we are plunged *in medias res*. Yet the first four stanzas (1-11) constitute a prolog for what may be fitly termed Isaiah's second book, a prolog presenting the program of what is to follow. — A voice rings out, as if from the heavenly heights, and commands: **Comfort ye, comfort ye!** The duplication is not only emphatic, making the command strong, but here at the head of the entire second book this significant double call to comfort God's people announces the sum and substance of the entire book: Isaiah II is God's Comfort Book. The double command implies on the part of the people that they are in distress and dejection, for such alone can be comforted; and on the part of God, who issues this command, it implies that there exists a rich fund of comfort, all-sufficient to relieve this distress. The piel of *nacham* signifies "to make one breathe easier," and thus "to comfort." The distress may still continue, but the comforting message points to the sure relief and deliverance that is in sight, and thus encourages, lifts up, and strengthens. This is genuine comfort. But in order to get the full force of this call to comfort, we must keep in mind the complete message of Isaiah in this half of his book. The Babylonian captivity is still far off, yet for that distressful time God's comfort is ready even now — Cyrus shall end the exile. Greater than the sadness of exile is the spiritual bondage and distress of sin; for that, too, the comfort is ready even now — Christ shall die and rise again. Finally, for all the suffering of God's people in all these world-ages marked by sin, wickedness, and persecution, God's comfort is at hand — there shall be an

eternal deliverance in the glory to come. This is the full sweep of God's comfort. — No persons are named who shall do the comforting. The LXX thought that the priests of Israel were meant, but any such idea misunderstands the dramatic and poetic form of prophecy. We meet these plural imperatives without a subject again and again. No subject is to be supplied, for the verb forms simply express the divine will in a general way. Thus, for instance, "Sing unto the Lord a new song!" In our text the thought is simply this: God most earnestly wants his people to be comforted. And yet, coming through the instrumentality of Isaiah, this command, general though it is and not addressed to Isaiah at all, even being plural, indicates this prophet's mission, both as to his message and his authority for uttering it. Isaiah is one of those sent in advance by God himself to comfort his people. — In the parallel line we have the synonymous command: **speak ye comfortably**, literally: "speak up to the heart," i. e. so as to produce an effect upon it, to fill it with confidence and courage. There is a double implication, enriching the thought in two ways, first that the comfort as something spoken lies in *the Lord's Word*, and secondly that the comfort thus offered can be received only by *faith*. To believe God's Word and promise is to be comforted indeed; it is still the only way.

Israel had to be sent into exile. That made it seem as if God would cast it off altogether. Yet here Israel is called **my people**, and the possessive *my* corresponds to the equally significant, *your* God. God still acknowledges Israel, first because of his covenant from which he has not receded, and secondly because of the remnant of true believers left among the many that have become unfaithful. — In the parallel line "my people" are called **Jerusalem**. Though they shall be in distant exile, far from home, God's people are still "Jerusalem," named thus from the city of the

Temple where God met and blessed his people, recalling to the sad exiles their old relation to God, and implying the promise that he would be in their midst once more in Jerusalem. There is fondness in the term, the love that calls for answering love, and a promise begging for faith. Yet because "Jerusalem" can apply eventually only to the true remnant of believers, this designation becomes a title for God's true believers of all future time, who actually accept his Word and comfort.

What is implied in *my* people comes out fully in the addition: **saith your God**. Whenever *'Elohim* thus carries a possessive it signifies the God of grace, full of power and might indeed, yet that power exercised in our favor. The imperfect *yomar* has nothing to do with either futurity (Hofmann, Stier, Klostermann), nor with duration, as though God said this continuously (Delitzsch). With Aug. Pieper we note two points in this tense: first, as distinguished from the perfect, which is objective, this imperfect is subjective and indicates the personal feeling of the speaker, wherefore, too, it is always near the beginning, never at the end of a section; secondly, the imperfect presupposes a certain situation that has developed, one concerning which the new present action is taken. In the case before us, Israel is in exile, so viewed by the prophet — this is the situation; and now, dealing with that, God speaks his commands. The English can use only its present tense for this Hebrew imperfect, and thus loses a good bit of the coloring of the original. Incidentally this imperfect at the head of our text shows that Is. II has the same author as Is. I, for if the author were a different person, and Is. II an independent volume, there simply could have been no *yomar* at this point. — In the second line: **and cry unto her**, i. e. call to her, or announce to her, is the counterpart to "saith your God."

The *vav* is merely explicative, "and" in the sense of "namely."

After the four impressive imperatives in the first two lines there now follow three object clauses, each of which is introduced by *ki* = "that," telling us what the Lord's comfort really is: 1) that her warfare is accomplished; 2) that her iniquity is pardoned; 3) that she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. There is no reason for translating the third *ki* with "for" (A. V.) in a series like this. Luther makes the second *ki* establish the first, and the third establish the other two, but grammatically there is no reason for such a reading. — The first thing God wants announced for Israel's comfort is **that her warfare is accomplished**. The term *tsaba* means "host," such as a warrior host; we have it in the title "Lord of hosts." Then it signifies the service of such a host, namely **warfare**, and the resulting hardship. Most interpreters lay stress on this hardship and suffering, perhaps because it matches the miseries of the exile. They then read *maleah*, which means "to fill up," of completion: her warfare **is accomplished** = her hardships are ended. One might be inclined to let that pass. Yet the picture does not seem to fit, for when Israel was thrown into exile it was by no means like a warrior host sent on a campaign by its commander and enduring the hardships incident to such a campaign. Israel fought on the wrong side, not under the Lord at all, but in a disastrous campaign of its own, and all its hardships were nothing but the long drawn-out bitterness of utter and abject defeat. The *tseba'ah* really signify the hurts of such a hopeless "warfare" through the years of the exile. The measure of these was now "filled up." Israel is no longer called on by God through her enemies to add anything more. Cyrus will now be her friend. Of course, this is a comforting announcement. — The perfect tenses in all the three

ki clauses are the so-called prophetic perfects. What the prophet sees in the far distant future he sees as a thing then already done. With God time limitations do not count; and it is he who shows the prophet what shall be, letting him see it, however, as something already past.

The second comforting announcement to be made to Israel is: **that her iniquity is pardoned.** The idea in *'avon* is deviation from the right path, and in this sense sin, or **iniquity**, with the idea of guilt especially in the singular, so that "guilt" can be used as a translation. The verb translated **is pardoned** is the niph'al of *ratsah*, "to have pleasure," and means "to be looked on with pleasure." The thought is pregnant, for guilt as such can never be so looked upon. With guilt the niph'al means: *wohlgefällig gemacht, beglichen sein* (Koenig), i. e. the guilt is settled for. Compare Lev. 26, 41. When the moderns, and even Delitzsch, read this of a satisfaction made by Israel itself in expiating its sin by exile, this is utterly false. Aug. Pieper rightly brands this sort of exegesis as descending to the shallow Jewish rabbinical interpretation, which substitutes for the divine Servant of Jehovah, Isaiah's *'Ebed Yahveh*, our Lord Jesus Christ, the blind, deaf, hardened, outcast Jewish nation, suffering indeed under the curse of God, but never expiating even a sin of its own, to say nothing of the world's sin. This false interpretation overthrows the analogy of faith, a thousand passages which declare that no man can pay for his guilt, and every Gospel feature in the Bible. It is answered by Is. 53, 4: "Surely HE hath borne our griefs," etc., in fact by this entire chapter. When God requires expiation from man that is the voice of the Law, a dreadful, never a comforting thing. Here Isaiah brings the Gospel to Israel with its richest comfort, and that centers in the divine cancellation of our guilt. "That her guilt is discharged," always means: by the grace, expiation, and

pardon of God; moreover, it always includes contrition and faith.

The third comforting fact for Israel to hear is: that **she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.** In spite of Delitzsch there is no difference between the perfect tense *laq^cchah*, **she hath received**, and the two perfects in the preceding *ki* clauses; all are prophetic. Even the critics who place Isaiah in the latter part of the exile, and date these prophecies about five years before the end of the exile, are compelled to read these tenses as prophetic perfects, picturing future events as already accomplished. Only radicals who place Isaiah after the exile are able to read these perfects (or any one of them) as ordinary perfects, denoting things past and done with, and then the prophet is made a miserable imposter and colossal liar. — Having perverted the second *ki* clause Delitzsch does the same thing with the third. What is meant by the dual *kiphlayim*, from *kephel*, "a double portion," here translated **double**, this abstract term designating something concrete? Delitzsch says: *double punishment*, and thus cuts the heart out of the Gospel proclamation. Israel is merely to know that what she has suffered in her exile has paid for her guilt, paid for it in fact twice over. Even Delitzsch feels there is something wrong. He tries to excuse God for making Israel pay double for her sins, since, of course, only an unjust judge would do such a thing. We are, forsooth, to believe the figment that God only figured Israel's penalty as being double her guilt, while in reality it was not double at all. Saving God from being unjust, he is gently turned into a liar. — A. Pfeiffer sees in *kiphlayim* something double like the two sides of a pocket, and thus arrives at a covering that hides both sides of a thing. While queer linguistically, this notion does not seem dangerous until we are told that one side of the pocket is justification, and the other sancti-

fication, which is beautifully Romanizing. When it comes to covering sins, justification is the entire pocket — if such an unbiblical figure is to be entertained at all. Sanctification never covers even a single sin. — **Double** signifies *double grace and blessing*. In the phrase **for all her sins** we are free to read *chatta'*, the abstract term for “sin,” of sin as such, here, of course, the entire mass of sin, or we may add the idea of penalty, taking that, too, as a whole. In either case God promises this wonderful exchange, in place of our sins (or penalties) a double measure of the opposite, namely grace and blessing. Note that this last *ki* clause is the summary for chapters 58-66, where our spiritual and eternal deliverance is described. Here we are told: “For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace and thine exactors righteousness.” 60, 17, etc. “For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be upon them.” 61, 7, etc. Of course, this double portion, and far beyond a mere double, namely the unending glory of heaven, is only for the true Israel whose sins are washed away by the great Servant of Jehovah.

3. The voice of him that cryeth in the wilderness,

**Prepare ye the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.**

**4. Every valley shall be exalted,
and every mountain and hill shall be
made low:
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough places plain.**

5. **And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together
for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.**

Verses 3 and 4 each contain two lines cut by a *cæsura*, while verse 5 has only ordinary lines, each marked by three rhythmic accents. This grand stanza (3-5) opens in a highly dramatic way, Pieper calls it a tableau: "Voice of a cryer!" *qol qore'* (st. constr.), the two words like an exclamation, not so forcefully translated in our version: **The voice of him that crieth.** Delitzsch writes: "The person disappears in the glory of his calling, recedes before the contents of his cry. The cry sounds like the long drawn-out trumpet blast of a herald." This dramatic feature goes a step farther when with the same abruptness we are placed **in the wilderness.** While practically it makes no difference whether "in the wilderness" is connected with "the voice" or with the verb "prepare," the parallelism of the lines requires the latter. Commentators inquire why this wilderness imagery is used, and find their answer in the history of ancient Israel, when the Lord came to Egypt through the Arabian desert to lead his people to Canaan. The picture in our text is of Jehovah coming to his people, not of their coming to him. Like some grand oriental king in festal procession, with cryers sent out far in advance to have the road fitly prepared for his royal progress, so the Lord here is shown moving out from Jerusalem to go to his captive people pictured as far out in the wilderness. — Note well the Gospel feature here embodied. In the very first place we heard the command to comfort Israel, and now there is added the news that the Lord himself is coming with all his comfort and blessing. This is the fundamental thing. With power and efficacy it is intended to reach the heart of the people, working in them the necessary preparation. No man can of him-

self do what is included in the command: **Prepare ye!** But the Word and grace which produce this Gospel command are able by their power to work in us what this command requires. There is all the covenant grace of God in the title LORD, as shown in the previous texts, and in the phrase **for our God**, there is the addition of his power as *Elohim* exerted in his peoples favor, comp. v. 1.

The imagery in the call: "Prepare ye **the way** of the Lord, make straight in the desert **a highway** for our God!" is carried out in vivid detail in verse 4: **Every valley**, or ravine, **shall be exalted** in the sense of filled up; and **every mountain and hill** in the line of the road **shall be made low**, so that the great highway may run straight and true, not needing to bend aside to right or left, and at the same time run smooth and level to its destination. It should impress us that the requirement here set down is on a scale so grand that it comports with the greatness of him who is to use this roadway. At the same time it should not escape us that this immense work of filling up ravines and laying low mountains and hills is certainly beyond our poor natural ability. That is exactly the impression to be conveyed, for to prepare the Lord's way into our hearts is a work which, strictly speaking, he alone can perform, and when it is asked of us it is only in the sense that we use his Law and Gospel and let his saving power operate in our hearts. — After mentioning ravines, mountains, and hills, it seems an anti-climax to add **the crooked**, and **the rough places**, for these would be only minor inequalities in the path of the road. The thing to note is that three of the Hebrew terms here used designate moral conditions as well as localities. A touch of interpretation is thus added to the figurative language. The term *'aqob*, **the crooked**, signifies "deceitful," and when used of localities: full of unevenness where one may hide. This is to be turned

into *mishor*, "evenness," translated in the A. V. **straight**, yet this is the term used for "right," and "justice." — The plural *r^ekasim* (from the supposed form *rokes*, Koenig; while Gesenius has *rekes*) is understood to mean *Zusammenrottungen*, all kinds of banding together for evil, and only in its transposed meaning signifies **rough places**, like extended rough and rocky ridges. These are to be turned into *biq'ah*, an extended level valley, here translated **plain**, and in the margin "a plain place." With three of the terms applied thus to moral states, we are made to feel that the entire description has a moral and spiritual import — the hearts of Israel are to be changed. There is where the real wilderness is, and where mighty changes must take place when now the Lord approaches. "Such preparation is spiritual; it consists in the deep conviction and confession that you are unfit, a sinner, poor, damned and miserable with all the works you are able to do." Luther. In the interpretation itself, and certainly then also in the preaching, it is not required to transform every poetic term here used into some spiritual counterpart. Attempts of this kind result only in more or less fanciful combinations. Impenitence, whatever its form, is the real hindrance to the Lord's coming into men's hearts, wherefore also, when the prophecy here given was fulfilled the Baptist issued the one great call: Repent! — The tense used is the prophetic imperfect *hayah*, which in the distant future sees what then has already come to pass; although Delitzsch strangely thinks the preceding imperatives make this imperfect a command.

There is dispute as to the force of the *vav* at the head of verse 5, whether it connects the revelation of the glory with the voice crying out, or whether it introduces this revelation as the reason for the entire call to repentance. But actually, one wonders why this *vav* should do either. Is not the simple and

obvious connection this, that the glory shall be revealed when the way has been prepared? That is the picture here painted: the road made smooth and straight, and then the Lord gloriously passing over it. It will not do to say that the revelation of the Lord's glory dare not be made dependent upon the repentance of the people. The Lord himself so makes it dependent. In the first place, there is no question but what the repentance will be there — God's Word does not return void. The number of those repenting may not be great, but that is never decisive with God. And in the second place, who would say that with no one prepared and repenting the glory of the Lord would appear anyway? So let us be satisfied: in v. 4 there is really a promise that the road of repentance will be built into men's hearts; and when this shall have been done the glory shall certainly follow.

The glory of the LORD is the sum of his attributes, or any part of them. His glory includes both his grace and mercy, as also his holiness and righteousness, i. e. both his saving and his judging power. There is connected with the *kebod Yahveh*, δόξα in the New Testament, the idea of manifestation, and so the Scriptures picture the Lord's glory as apparent to human senses, though the glory itself always transcends all human senses and there is an act of divine revelation back of every perception of it. Let us recall the burning bush which Moses saw, the thunders and lightnings on Sinai, the cloud in Solomon's Temple, the radiant glory when the angelic host sang on Bethlehem's fields, the Transfiguration, the figure on the white throne at the judgment. It will pay to study in particular Ez. 1 and Rev. 1. The promise made in our verse that the glory of the Lord **shall be revealed** carries with it no details of any kind, and is therefore comprehensive and general. This ἀποκάλυψις really embraces many acts and different modes, all of them unveiling and manifesting the Lord so that

his greatness, majesty, power, grace, and holiness affects men, either to save them, or to destroy them. — By **all flesh** men in general are meant. The collective *kol-basar* has the plural verb *ra'u* in the ordinary *constructio ad sensum*, the object of the verb being understood. The addition: all flesh **altogether**, *yachdav* (a favorite word with Isaiah) combines all men under the term “flesh” as one great mass. So the prophecy here uttered is comprehensive in the highest degree. It states the program for the entire second half of Isaiah’s book. The revelation of the Lord’s glory began with Israel’s deliverance from Babylon, by which the Lord manifested to the whole world his power over the nations and his mercy and truth upon Israel; it continued in the most wonderful manner in the Incarnation of God’s Son and in the world-wide spread of his Gospel; and it will culminate in the great events of the last day. — To confirm this promise the solemn seal is placed upon it: **for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it**, a formula used repeatedly, cf. 1, 20; etc. The *ki* in these assurances is always causal: “because” he hath spoken it, therefore it will come to pass. And so ends this remarkable second stanza.

6. **The voice said, Cry.**

And he said, What shall I cry?

All flesh *is* grass,

and all the goodness thereof *is* as
the flower of the field:

7. **The grass withereth, the flower fadeth:**

because the spirit of the LORD bloweth
upon it:

surely the people *is* grass.

8. **The grass withereth, the flower fadeth:**

but the word of our God shall stand for
ever.

The dramatic form continues in this third Hebrew stanza. In the first stanza God speaks; in the second an unnamed voice; and now we have a dialog between two voices. There are three long lines cut by a cæsura, and a fourth stopped short at the cæsura, thus only a half line — like a broken sigh (note the tragic sense!). Then the concluding two short lines with antithetical thought. — The construction of *qol 'omer* is the counterpart to *qol qore'* in v. 3: **The voice said**, or more literally: “A sound — some one says”; “Listen, one saying.” No person is mentioned, just the fact that some one is speaking. We are to gather ourselves who the speaker may be, namely the Lord himself or one of his messengers. — For this voice calls out: **Cry!** just this one word, and no more. It is a command to shout aloud, to proclaim something. Note the resemblance to v. 3. God’s prophets and preachers are simply to be voices, crying, shouting, proclaiming — the words, thought, message he himself supplies. It is the absolute mark of a false prophet that besides crying out, he manufactures part or all of his message and then generally pretends it came from God. — A second voice, equally unnamed, replies. **And he said**, *ve'amar*, means that some one, whoever this may be, answered. The perfect tense simply states the past fact. We must think of the prophet hearing first the one, then the other voice; and we are to hear them now through his narrative. — This second voice asked: **What shall I cry?** It is an effective way of emphasizing first the herald duty, and secondly the herald message, bringing out decisively that the latter is laid by the Lord himself on the herald’s lips. It is the supreme mark of the true prophet and preacher.

The message to be cried out is striking indeed: **All flesh is grass, etc.** The term *basar* designates man as a physical being, now corrupted by sin in all his natural powers. The addition *kol*, plus in this case

the Hebrew article, takes in the whole human race, yet not in the sense that it belongs to the general category of "flesh" or physical creatures, but in the sense of this particular mass called mankind. — And this mass is called **grass**, a figure which pictures mankind in its powerlessness and perishableness. To bring out this thought more fully there is added a second line: **and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field.** Koenig renders *chesed* by "grace" or "charm." Pieper rightly says that the relation of *chesed* to *basar* is like the value of flower bloom compared with grass. As a grassy plain in its season is covered with the bright bloom of various flowers, so *basar*, as its finest display, has only the proud knowledge, works, and virtues of its sinful nature. *Tsits* is floral bloom in general, *Blumenflor*. At certain seasons the vale of Sharon and the plains of Jesreel were gay with anemones (wind flower) and lily blooms, and a hot east wind withered them all perhaps in one day.

In verse 7 the tenses are perfects and must be read as expressing simple past facts. **The grass withereth**, should really be: "is withered"; **the flower fadeth**, really: "is faded." We are shown, not the process as it may take place, but the result as it has taken place. — The *ki* points out the cause for this calamity: **because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it**, literally: "has blown upon it," the thing is already done. In this final clause the figure and the reality melt into each other, somewhat like the combination of figure and thought in the second half of verse 4. It is a touch of what Trench has called biblical allegory, a fine sample of which is found in John 15, 1-8. Reality and figure are so woven together that the one explains the other at each point. It is a mistake to tear the two apart and place them side by side. We are not told, in our passage, that as the hot wind dries up grass and flowers, so the spirit

of the Lord destroys all flesh and its charm, but, combining grass and flowers with flesh and its charm, the spirit of the Lord lays them low. Ps. 90, 7 etc. — **The spirit of the LORD** is mentioned, not because *ruach* means “wind,” for that idea would keep on clinging superficially to the figure, while the words are trying already to crowd the reality upon our attention. It is because “the spirit of the Lord” breathes in his Word. Of course this **spirit** is the Lord himself; we are free to stop with that, or we may go on and think of the Third Person of the Godhead. The chief point is that here we have the Lord manifesting himself in regard to sinful flesh by means of his Word. It is here, beyond question, the Word of the Law, every utterance of it against the sin and guilt that is in all the flesh of our race. This Word has blasted our race. “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” Gen. 2, 17. And this extends to all nature: “Cursed is the ground for thy sake,” Gen. 3, 17. It is on this account that there is an inner, and not merely outer, correspondence between dead grass and flowers and spiritually dead men. — The great reality here ordered proclaimed is the very message our blind and obdurate race needs. All this folly of naturalism and evolution, this pride of science and human progress, of advancing morality and social virtue, all these attempts to build a kingdom of God on earth out of the human products of flesh, are a sham and a farce, the supreme delusion of the devil, for we are all dead grass and shriveled petals, cursed and damned and done for long ago by the spirit that speaks in the Law. — There is a break in the rhythm when now the short line follows: **surely the people is grass**. Cheyne calls this “a weak homiletical addition,” and simply cancels the line from the text — a sample of the lordliness and arbitrariness of higher critics who are accountable to no one save themselves. At the same time they show how super-

ficially they read, for they take **the people**, *ha-'am* as an equivalent for "all flesh," whereas "the people," in the singular, and with the Hebrew article, here must mean this specific people, namely Israel. And so this abbreviated line reaches the climax: even Israel is nothing but **grass** in all that pertains to its own nature. In fact, Israel has followed its own nature, till the place where once it reared its goodness aloft, now, like a heat-blasted plain, knows it no more. Israel in far-away Babylon is like dead grass and dead bloom of flowers. — Hence also the strong assurance: **surely**, used, as here, when a thing is said that one would otherwise hardly believe. It is tragic in the extreme — even Israel, *the* people of all people, grass and nothing more! — But Pieper is right, this is only part of the message; if there had been nothing further to add, it would have been useless to come with this sad part. God, however, even when we have come to taste the folly, bitterness, and deadliness of our sins, must first of all, in coming to us to help us, hammer this in, and that thoroughly. Even the sinner who is down must not in any way think that perhaps there is a little "goodness" left in him. Only when the conviction is complete that all, literally and absolutely all, human power, wisdom, virtue, help, and whatever it be, is wholly nothing, can the grace and power of God do their work.

In the 8th verse two short antithetical lines furnish the climax of the stanza. The repetition is, of course, in the first place for dramatic emphasis: **The grass withereth, the flower fadeth.** At the same time this is the contrast needed for what now is to follow: **but the word of our God shall stand for ever.** *Dabar* is anything spoken, and with the addition *Elohim*, anything spoken by God. But, as we have seen in verse 4, **our God** points to the divine power as operative in our favor, and thus brings in his grace. The word of "our God" is the one he has

spoken in grace. Put in contrast here with the withered grass this "word of our God" is his gracious promise, spoken long ago to his people, and repeated again and again, concerning their deliverance and restoration. And this word is imperishable and unchanging, it **shall stand for ever**, *yaqum* (the jussiv from *qum*) here in the sense, not only of abiding unchanged, but, since it consists of a gracious promise, in the sense of attaining its fulfillment without diminution or shadow of doubt. The thought is pregnant — since all flesh has withered and perished, therefore no flesh shall be able to hinder the fulfillment of our God's Word and promise, whether it be proud and mighty Babylon, powerful Egypt, or towering Assyria. All the forces of flesh are nothing over against the Word of God. Even Israel as flesh shall not prevent the plan and purpose of God, nor can it, on the other hand, by its own aid or strength add the least to our God's Word in bringing it to pass. Here only the *Soli Deo Gloria* has room to stand. And the event has proved it: Israel was delivered from Babylon, and Christ became the Savior of the world. So also the last part of "the Word of our God" will come to pass, when the final judgment crowns the whole gracious plan of God and finishes his saving work.

What a glorious text for Advent, with its dramatic tableaux, and its clear, strong truth, striking to the very roots of things. These are the realities which our generation must be made to see.

SUGGESTIONS

Most preachers will be satisfied with a simple analytical outline for this text. That means a theme summarizing the contents of the text in such a way as to enable a natural split into its three obvious parts. Here is a sample: **The Lord's Most Blessed Advent Promise.** The parts under this

theme may be drawn directly from the text, in the following statements from the Lord: 1) Comfort ye my people! 2) The glory of the Lord shall be revealed. 3) The Word of our God shall stand for ever. In each of these three parts a contrast may be worked out, for the comfort applies only to those in sin and guilt; the coming revelation of glory involves due preparation on our part; and the eternal Word is the only hope and help for fading flesh.—Some of the outlines that are offered us do not carry out the analysis according to the three Hebrew stanzas of the text, but content themselves with a looser structure. Thus Langsdorff suggests: **The Right Advent Celebration**, and offers as the parts: 1) The right Advent Lord; 2) The right Advent heart. Yet it is evident, the idea contained in "celebration" is not worked out in the divisions "Lord" and "heart." If one wished to work it out, he might speak, first of *the preparation* needed for the celebration, namely repentance (3-5); secondly of *the event* which is to be celebrated, namely the Lord's coming in grace and glory (1-2 and 5); finally, of *the joy* that is to mark this celebration (6-8, we perishable creatures saved by the eternal Word). This recasting of the effort by Langsdorff is no longer entirely analytical.—The outline of Taube really takes in only verses 1-5: **How the King of Glory Announces His Coming**. 1) By the sweet message: Comfort, comfort ye my people. 2) By the serious admonition: Prepare ye the way of the Lord. This can easily be improved, and also made to cover the whole text. **What Does the Lord's Gracious Coming Mean for You and Me?** 1) He brings us the greatest comfort. 2) We must prepare in true repentance. 3) So shall we too stand for ever.

A pointer for the proper treatment of the text may be found in the special import of this Sunday. This is the Baptist's Sunday, the Sunday for making plain just what our Advent preparation involves, namely *true repentance*. Looking at the text from this point of view we see that it pivots on verses 3-5, for in these verses there is issued **The Great Advent Call: Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord!** 1) Prepare to receive his comfort; 2) Prepare in true repentance; 3) Prepare by embracing the Lord's Word.—The old line epistle for this Sunday, 1 Cor. 4, 1-5, deals with the office of *the ministry*. Now the Baptist was one of the Lord's great ministers, and from him we may learn what the ministry is to do. Reu has an outline following this cue: **What is the Work of the Ministry in the Advent Season?** 1) It is to comfort: The Lord cometh; 2) It is to admonish: Prepare ye the way of the Lord. 3) It is to give us assurance: The

Word of our God shall stand for ever. This last part, however, is a substitution for the one by Reu, since he includes verses 9-11, and draws his third part from these verses.

The preachers and homileticians who have handled this text leave us serenely in the lurch when it comes to a syncretical treatment. And yet this text, when we do no more than split it through perpendicularly, furnishes a most excellent synthesis. In v. 1-2 we have sin and guilt; in v. 3-5 a description of impenitence and unbelief; and in v. 6-8 a description of the spiritual death of all flesh. On the other hand, in v. 1-2 we find the comfort of pardon and restoration; in v. 3-5 true repentance and communion with the Lord; and in v. 6-8, the eternal and unchanging Word. Out of this rich material it should not be difficult to construct an effective sermon. We may use the two perpendicular halves just as they stand. The opening words of the text offer a theme: **Comfort, Comfort Ye My People!** Our first part will be: The desperate *need* for which this comfort is meant; and the second, the effective *power* by which this comfort overcomes the need. In describing the need we may speak of the sin and guilt, the impenitence and unbelief, and the awfulness of spiritual death, thus following the text order. We may also rearrange: spiritual death; its cause, sin and guilt; its form, impenitence and unbelief. In treating the power we may deal with the pardon and restoration; how this involves repentance (subjective means); and is mediated by the Word (objective means). Or, rearranging the line: the Word; repentance; pardon. The whole sermon pattern may be woven quite closely by making the three sub-divisions in the second part match those in the first part. — A synthesis of different type is shown in the following: Advent calls us to face **the Greatest Spiritual Realities**: sin and guilt — death and doom — unbelief and impenitence — power and judgment — grace and pardon — restoration and double blessing — God glorious and his Word eternal. — In this text we hear 'The Voices that Cry unto us in Advent. Here, too, we see: The Tragedy of the Withered Grass and the Faded Flowers. And, to close these suggestions as to themes: The Lord's Triumphal Procession in Grace and Glory.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Deut. 18, 15-19

In the plan of the Church Year this Sunday is added to the Christmas festival, and its gospel texts, when properly chosen, have something to say concerning the person and office of him whose birth is about to be celebrated. This shows us the significance of the present text. We are to preach on *the person and work of Christ* in view of his birthday celebration. A superficial look at our text might lead us to content ourselves with his prophetic work, for here he is presented as the supreme Prophet. Yet a closer inspection shows that the emphasis is by no means on Christ's work of preaching and teaching as such, in contrast with his high priestly and royal work. The emphasis is on the similarity of Christ to Moses, and both are called prophets rather in a general way, for both of them are here presented as far superior to the men ordinarily called prophets. Moreover, this similarity of Christ to Moses is like that of the antitype to its type, the former always far exceeding the latter. Moses was far more than a prophet. Comparing what he was and did with even the greatest of Israel's prophets, he not only towers above them, but all their preaching rests on what he did. Moses was the mediator prophet, God's special instrument for arranging the whole first covenant in detail with Israel as a nation. His office was very comprehensive. He led Israel, he represented it, he dealt with it as God's representative, all which was far more than to deliver God's messages to Israel and teach and warn the people. And it is so that Moses prefigured Christ, the far greater

Mediator of a greater covenant, of whom it is true: "No man cometh to the Father, but by me," John 14, 6. This is the greatness of Jesus here foretold, in order that by properly perceiving it we may celebrate his birth with due faith and joy.

In Deuteronomy Moses, like a father taking leave of his children, for the last time, and with the greatest earnestness impresses upon Israel its obligations to live in the Law of his covenant with all sincerity and devotion. Moses repeats much of the Law, but in these final addresses, on the threshold of Canaan, he does this with admonitory additions, adding the true motives which ought to produce the obedience his Lord desires. Our text is from a section of this kind. Moses recalls to Israel the regulations concerning the Levites, and how Israel must shun all the idolatrous and superstitious abominations of the inhabitants of Canaan, keeping true to the true worship of the Lord. At this point, and as an incentive to faithfulness in true worship, Moses repeats God's promise concerning the great Prophet to come, his successor in the new covenant.

15. The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.

The Hebrew begins with the word *nabi'*, a **Prophet**, printed with a capital in our version, because the translators meant to indicate the reference to Christ. Linguistically the term comes from *naba'*, and thus means "speaker," *Verkündiger*, one who utters things that lie in the other world, or in the future, thus in the domain otherwise closed to men. It is well, however, to remind ourselves that as yet Israel had had no prophets such as we find in later periods. The people, now at last grown to the proportions of a small nation, had just been brought from Egypt through the wilderness to the borders

of Canaan. Its great intermediary with God had been Moses. The scene described in Num. 12, 1-8 is quite decisive as regards the office of Moses when compared with others who might receive revelations from God. Moses would tower above them all. It would be a mistake then to ignore this historical situation, and to construct instead a concept of our own as to what "prophet" signifies, from the long line of *nebi'im* known to us from later times. The word as used in our text is a general term, designating representatives of God as eminent as Moses and Christ, and then taking in others on a far lower level. — The emphatic points are the additions attached to "Prophet." We are told, first of all, that this promised Prophet shall be **from the midst of thee, of thy brethren**, the latter phrase making the former more definite. While all those belonging to one nation may be called "brethren," on the strength merely of their nationality, in the case of the Israelites the term means more, since these "brethren" had besides their national bond that of the covenant with God. They were all to be children of God through faith, and thus in the highest sense **brethren**. Now the great promised *Nabi'* was to be a son of Israel. One might think it strange that such a feature should be especially mentioned, for it could hardly be expected that a notable prophet of any kind would be sent to Israel from some foreign nation, these all being heathen. The real reason is discovered in the fulfillment of the Lord's promise, when he sent his own Son to be this Prophet, and yet sent him in human flesh, born of the seed of David, of the Virgin Mary. This is the point that makes our text so appropriate for the present Sunday. It promises the Incarnation of the Messianic Prophet, and thus describes his *person*. — The next addition refers to his *work*: **like unto me**. While this comparison is broad and general, it nevertheless does two things: it classes

Moses and Christ together, and it draws a line between the two and all others. If Moses and all other prophets belonged together, then this coming Prophet would not be likened in such a pointed way to Moses only. That ought to be clear. Now the text does not state in what respect Moses is thus in a class by himself, a prophet indeed, and yet above all other prophets. It is perfectly correct to seek our answer from the Scriptures, although modern commentators refuse to do so and rule out the pertinent references. One answer is undoubtedly found in Ex. 20, where God himself vindicates Moses and states that with him alone he spake face to face. This point deals with the superior way in which God treated with Moses. Here already we can draw the parallel to Christ, and it certainly holds. Not by dreams and visions or other prophetic communications did Christ receive his commission from God, but with a directness exceeding even that of Moses. Jesus was in heaven itself, John 3, 13; he was from above and above all, v. 31; he came down from heaven to do his Father's will, John 6, 38; as his Father taught him (namely in heaven), so he spake, John 8, 28; he spake nothing of himself, but the Father gave him commandment, and even as the Father said unto him, so he spake, John 12, 49-50. This ought to suffice. Moses and Jesus belong together. Moses ascended the mount, where God showed him many things and spoke to him personally, cf. especially Ex. 25, 9 and 40. Jesus as the Son of God was in heaven itself with the Father and there received what he should do and speak. Yes, Jesus is far greater than Moses, and yet in the features indicated there is a likeness between the two, differentiating these two from all others. Back of this likeness, however, there lies the office of these two. Moses was so distinguished by God because he was a mediator between God and Israel, and Jesus, God's Son, who came to us from

heaven, is a still greater Mediator. The mediation of the former dealt with the promise of God, for which reason a human mediator sufficed; the mediation of the latter dealt with the fulfillment of the promise, the actual working out of the atonement itself by means of an all-sufficient sacrifice, for which reason a divine-human Mediator, and none other, was alone sufficient. So again Jesus is far greater than Moses, and yet the likeness between these two remains, and separates them from all others. — Moses tells Israel: **The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet.** The name here employed combines Jehovah with its reference to the covenant and divine grace, and 'Elohim with its reference to the divine power, adding the possessive "thy" to the latter to mark this power as exercised in Israel's favor. Note what was said in the previous text on "our God" and the additions of such possessives to 'Elohim. In the very name here employed there lies the double assurance that God has the gracious *will* to fulfill his promise, and that he has the *power* to bring it to pass for Israel. Both thoughts are significant when the greatness of the promise is kept in mind. — The verb *yaqim*, from *qum*, **will raise up** unto thee, fits the Incarnation of the Son, cf. Jer. 23, 5. It is used in quite a general way of men whom God lifts into prominence, but always there is a manifestation of power; how great the power in any case is gathered from the person or object involved.

It is a bidding on Moses' part, yet one taken over from God himself, only abbreviated (cf. v. 18), when Israel is told: **unto him ye shall hearken, thishma'un**, the jussive from *shama'*. Here *the authority* of the great Prophet is stated. One might, of course, say that God wants his people to hearken to every one of his prophets, even the humblest of them, and might thus try to reduce this Prophet to the common level. But such reasoning refutes itself,

for in regard to none of his prophets has God ever given such a specific command, and that, moreover, through the mouth of one who himself was more than a prophet (Moses). This is fully borne out when we look at the fulfillment. Consider Luke 9, 35; Matth. 17, 5; Mark 9, 7, where Christ stands transfigured in the presence of Moses himself and of Elijah, and the voice from the clouds repeats the very words Moses once wrote: "Hear him." The multitude was right when it said: "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee," Matth. 21, 11; and again, at the feeding of the five thousand: "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world," John 6, 14. In his sermon on the day of Pentecost St. Peter quotes: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you." Acts 3, 22. In his defense before the Sanhedrim Stephen again quotes this prophecy of Moses, with its pointed conclusion: "Him shall ye hear." Acts 7, 37. We may well ask: Where is there anything like it regarding any other prophet?

And yet a commentator like Keil dares to tell us: "that this promise (in our text) points neither to some single prophet, nor even immediately and exclusively to the Messiah, but deals with the sending of the prophets in general." How can such an amazing conclusion be reached? We are told, first because chapters 17 and 18 deal with Israel's secular and religious governors. Indeed, but right here God promises the greatest of all religious governors to Israel, namely his own Son. Keil's own assumption leaves him completely in the lurch. Secondly we are told, that the paragraph following our text furnishes the test by which future prophets in general may be judged, and that therefore our text must refer to prophets in general. That about the test is true

enough, but never for a moment does the fact that Israel is going to have other prophets upset the fact that a supreme Prophet is promised, one so important as to deserve mention above all others, and who therefore is especially described. To circumvent the singular *nabi'* Keil would persuade us that this means only, that whenever Israel shall need a prophet one shall be forthcoming; but this is no longer expounding the text, but twisting and altering its meaning. Nor is it true when Keil tells us that the words "from thy midst, of thy brethren" signify that Israel is to have its own prophets, and therefore need not resort to the pagan prognosticators, for verses 9-14 summarize all the Canaanitish abominations and state that Israel is to exterminate the Canaanites completely. Keil's presumed contrast is not in the text at all, but an invention to bolster up his false interpretation of the supreme Prophet. Finally when Keil brushes aside Num. 12, 6 etc., and Deut. 14, 10, and explains "like unto me" in our text so that this means only the mediation of prophets in general as spokesmen of God, stretching v. 16 to cover this notion, he destroys even the exceptional character of Moses, reducing him, too, to the level of an ordinary prophet. To such lengths the man is ready to go that Christ may not be specifically meant in our text. This is sorry exegesis! — Von Hofmann indeed rejects any collective idea in *nabi'*, yet he, too, clings to what he calls a plural significance in the historical sense. What he means is that the Prophet of prophets was not to be merely a future person, but was to be according to his spirit in each prophet in a certain measure! They had the prophecy of the way, not that of the goal; and as the goal is the chief thing about the way, so Christ is to be the consummation of all the prophecy of Israel. But this is no longer an exegesis of the plain prophecy on our text; it is only von Hofmann's idea of the relation of the Old Testa-

ment prophets to Christ, something our text does not refer to, nor any of the Scripture references to our text. One may like von Hofmann's general idea of penetrating into the inwardness of the Scriptures, and may accept what he says of the relation of Christ and the prophets, but the way to reach that inwardness is not to make a text say what it plainly does not say, however true the imported idea may be when looked at by itself.

16. According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. 17. And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.

These verses present the mediatorship of Moses and the special character of his office. In *kekol*, **according to all**, etc., the connective *ke* indicates correspondence. Israel asked for a mediator in connection with the giving of the Law; in accord with that the Lord is going to provide Israel not merely with the mediator asked for, namely Moses, but with one like him and yet far greater, namely Christ. This is the line of thought. From former accounts only so much is here repeated as is needed to bring out fully this correspondence. Deut. 5, 22-28 reports that the elders came to Moses and asked for mediation. They were Israel's spokesmen. In the briefer statement in our text we therefore have **thou desiredst**, "didst beg," or "ask for." And **of the LORD thy God**, *me'im*, really reads "on the part of" the Lord, etc., which means not only that he grant the request, but that he proceed on his part as requested. — This occurred in **Horeb**, the locality of Sinai where the single peak called Horeb towered above the general mountain height. — The time, too, is mentioned, in

the day of the assembly, when all Israel at the Lord's command was gathered at the base of Horeb, before the fixed bounds, and heard from the Lord himself the Ten great Words of the Law.—These references are enough to recall the terrifying experiences of that day: "And all the people saw the thunders, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." Ex. 20, 18-19. In our text this request is repeated in substance: **Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God.** They had indeed heard that voice, Ex. 20, 1; Deut. 5, 24, and though they heard it and had not died, yet the experience had been so dreadful that they feared for themselves in case of any repetition.—First they mention the terror of **the voice** itself. The imagination is unable to picture this with any degree of adequacy—words sounding forth from what must have looked like an erupting volcano, and reverberating over the heads of the entire nation as there assembled. On other occasions the Lord spoke from heaven, and then, too, they who were made to hear the supernatural voice were filled with awe, but there is nothing so tremendous and overwhelming as this voice from Horeb.—Secondly, there is the visible terror: **neither let me see this great fire any more.** These were the blinding flashes of lightning from the thick black clouds and the huge, billowing smoke. This fire is mentioned especially, because it most of all inspired the fear of sudden death. What if the livid flames should suddenly strike down in flash upon flash among the crowds of people!—The clause, **that I die not**, is attached with a simple *vav*. Deut. 5, 26 states the reason for this fear: "For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of

the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?" Sinful flesh must always fear death in coming thus into immediate contact with the living God whose power is always and in every way hostile to sin. — In the promulgation of the Law, directed as it is against sin, the holiness and righteousness of God, backed by his infinite power to destroy, had to be fully revealed so as forever to impress men. The manifestation which God chose, both ocular and audible, was certainly adequate for the purpose, both for Israel who actually witnessed it, and for all others who now read the inspired record. It may not be popular to-day to dwell on the vindictive and punitive power of God, since our age loves the idol of a god who is nothing but softness and gentleness. There is too little preaching of the Law in our pulpits, especially of its terrors. Even among Lutherans there are those who have come to be so afraid of possibly falling into what they call legalism and legalistic methods, that they grow weak in the right use of the Law. Once for all let us remember that the full power and effect of the Law must precede the work of the Gospel, that without the Law the Gospel becomes a perversion, and that for the restraint and suppression of the flesh still left in us Christians we cannot possibly omit the Law or tone down its terrors. We need the unadulterated Law, as we need the unadulterated Gospel. A denatured Law always means a correspondingly denatured Gospel. You cannot reach Calvary, except through Horeb. — The Lord approved the request of Israel, since that request was the very result the Lord aimed at. *Hetibu*, the hiphil from *tob*, signifies: "they have done, or acted, well," namely in the matter of speaking as they did. Israel needed mediation, but far beyond the mediation Moses was capable of furnishing, who could indeed transmit the Law and the regulations connected with the old dispensation, but no more. This Mosaic mediation was

important, but important only as being preliminary. A greater Mediator had to follow, one like Moses, and yet far exceeding him. And this ultimate Mediator the Lord promised.

18. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. 19. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

We see at once that verse 15 is only an abbreviation of what we have here in verses 18-19. We shall confine ourselves to the new points in these verses. There is first of all the statement: **and will put my words in his mouth.** The verb is from *nathan*: "give" my words etc. This is the standard biblical description of divine inspiration. It may seem unusual to ascribe inspiration to Jesus, yet this is exactly what the Scriptures do. The specific promise in our text has its fullest counterpart in the free acknowledgments of Jesus. "As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." John 2, 28. "The Father which sent me, he gave me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak." John 12, 49, and this is almost a repetition of the last clause in v. 18 of our text. "Whatever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." John 12, 50, and this explains what it means to have the Father's words put into his mouth. "I have given them the words which thou gavest me." John 17, 8. Let us note too, that all these statements of Jesus concerning his own words denote verbal inspiration. The Lord does not say of him: I will give my thoughts in his heart or on his lips; but: my words in his mouth, i. e. when he opens it to speak. The inspirational act is here said to take place when the mouth forms and utters

the words. And the result is no less than this that the words thus uttered are God's own words, spoken just as he wants them spoken — not one word more, or one word less than he wants, and every word just in the way that he wants. It should be plain to us that this refers to Jesus in his human nature, during his state of humiliation. The fact is that Jesus not only said just what the Father gave him to say, but he did only what the Father showed him. And certainly, if God could use the mouths of imperfect men to put into them his words and have these words spoken just as he wanted them spoken, the sinless, perfect mouth of Jesus was a far better instrument for transmitting his words. Foolish men reject this inspiration as "mechanical" and mere "dictation." It is dynamic in the highest degree instead of "mechanical"; and our old writers use only the figure of a dictation to an amanuensis, to illustrate the point that the words are God's, not the prophet's or writer's own product. No figure dare be pressed, and a figure is only a figure and no more.

The addition: **and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him**, is a parallel to the preceding statement and helps to make it clearer. It, too, deals with Jesus in his human nature and in his humiliation. We know how by both word and deed he most gladly, and always perfectly, accorded with his Father's will. That will and command, and that alone, he brought to Israel. Compare above John 12, 49, where he uses the same term "commandment," ἐντολή, really not an imperious order, but the German *Auftrag*, or commission. There is no thought of compulsion on the Father's part, or a reluctance on Jesus' part needing any compulsion. **I shall command** is translated from *tsavah*, "to set up," for instance a precept, or order. — In keeping with the term *nabi* these statements deal with Jesus' words and teaching. He indeed gave his Father's "words" to his disciples,

John 17, 8, and to all Israel. In the four Gospels the bulk of the account is the teaching of the Messiah. Yet this is combined with his work throughout, the two constituting an inseparable whole. Drop his work, his suffering, death, and resurrection, and you cut the heart out of his teaching. — Another point to note is that here the Lord promises the climax of what he intends for Israel. He did much through Moses, and never again that much through any other prophet. In fact, the entire line of Israel's prophets is only an extension of Moses' work, for all of them only urged the people to be true to the Mosaic regulations and to cherish in faith the Mosaic promises. If they added anything it was only to make clearer what Moses had already given. But in and through Jesus the great fulfillment would come, something that even Moses could not bring. Here then was to be a final revelation, beyond which there would and could be no more. In this sense we must read verses 18-19 to get their full meaning.

And it shall come to pass is a standard Old Testament assurance. The normal and natural thing for all Israel would be to hearken to this great Mediator Prophet, whom the Lord would raise up unto them, just as it was the normal thing for them to believe Moses and any other prophet. Our text takes this for granted, in fact this forms the basis for what is now said — which we should not overlook. With ages of the most wonderful revelations and promises behind them how could any Israelite refuse to believe when the crowning fulfillment actually arrived? Yet the Lord foreknew how his Son would come unto his own, and his own would not receive him. So the solemn threat is here appended: **whosoever will not hearken unto my words, etc.**, literally: "the man who" etc. The best commentary on this threat is Jesus' word: "He that believeth not shall be damned." The verb for **hearken**, *shama'* (cf. v. 15), in its preg-

nant use includes obeying and following, much as the English term does. Not to hearken then is to disregard, disobey, or in one word unbelief. — This is made clearer by bringing out that such unbelief is directed against God; it is disregarding **my words**, either as though they are not true, or as though they are worth nothing. Special stress lies on the possessive “my,” as appears from the addition: **which he shall speak in my name**. Words so spoken are indeed the Lord’s own. We may compare them to those of an ambassador to some foreign country when he delivers a message from his own government; that message is not the ambassador’s, but his government’s word. One might be satisfied to take **in my name** as equivalent to “by my order and my authority.” But in reality this does not satisfy the biblical idea in *shem*, ὄνομα, “name,” which always conveys the notion of revelation made by God of himself. Goebel (*Reden unseres Herrn nach Johannes*, II, 121) defines the “name” as *das Ergebnis seiner Selbstoffenbarung an die Welt, oder die Summe dessen, was Gott fuer die Menschen ist*. Thus to speak “in the Lord’s name” signifies speaking in the vital matter of his revelation, i. e. to make the Lord known to us by his name and revelation. Faith in the words thus spoken is more than bowing to the authority of the Lord and his name; it is the confidence which accepts and appropriates the precious blessings which his name and revelation bring to us. Unbelief, or not hearkening, is more than proud resistance to the authority centered in the divine name; it is nothing less than rejecting the saving revelation embodied in that name and made accessible to us by that name alone. In other words, God’s **name** is not a matter merely of Law, and hence authority, but of the Gospel, and hence of saving grace.

The man who rejects the words of Christ shall be called to account: “**I will require it of him**. The

first pronoun is emphatic: "I myself," the Lord God whose words, the words of salvation, no man may reject with impunity, least of all the sinner. There is great restraint in the threat, for the verb *darash* signifies to seek, to inquire, and then to require, to demand. It is here construed with *me'im*, "on the part of" him. That means, the Lord will demand the reason for unbelief. But there neither is, nor ever can be a sound reason. When this dread inquiry takes place the unbeliever will be dumb. Oh, he had high and mighty reasons enough during his life, loudly and proudly advertising them, and using them perhaps to destroy the faith of others who were willing to hearken unto Jesus' words; but in that final inquiry the absolute unreasonableness of his unbelief will stare him in the face, with no possibility of denial, and all his former reasons that once seemed so convincing will appear as what they really are, miserable, lying fig-leaves behind which he will no longer hide the utter shame of his godlessness and wickedness (*ἀσέβεια* and *ἀδικία*, Rom. 1, 18). The text stops with this, permitting us to conclude what the judgment will be on every man who will not hearken to the great and final Mediator Prophet.

SUGGESTIONS

A mere glance at this text shows that its subject is *the great Prophet that should come into the world*. A little reflection will add that the ordinary analytical treatment is out of the question, for the simple reason that the text does not fall into consecutive coordinate parts. One sees at once that verse 15 and verses 18-19 are in substance the same and cannot form separate parts; and then verses 16-17 furnish only a subordinate historical reference, which again cannot be made a separate part. All this means that when the contents of this text is put into a sermon it will have to be by means of synthesis. That means that we list in due order all the points here prophetically presented concerning Christ, and then com-

bine and arrange these points in a free manner of our own so that we secure the parts we need under the theme we have found most suitable. One may list these points:

- 1) Israel asked for a mediator when the Law was given.
- 2) God commended that, and made Moses such a mediator.
- 3) Thus Moses came to exceed all the other prophets Israel afterwards had.
- 4) God saw farther than Israel, and in accord with their request promised a still greater Prophet than Moses.
- 5) This was to be God's Son, yet of Israel's brethren.
- 6) In his office he was to resemble Moses, thus differing from all others (Mediator).
- 7) He was to bring to Israel the supreme revelation.
- 8) This consists in God's own words — what he shall order Jesus to say — all that is spoken in the Lord's name.
- 9) In a supreme way this requires faith: "unto him ye shall hearken."
- 10) The warning and threat against unbelief is equally strong: "whosoever will not hearken", etc.

In recasting this material to form a sermon we are certainly free to add, from the New Testament fulfillment in Christ, whatever elucidates any of the above points. In addition we are free to give all this material its Advent setting, letting the festival now so near at hand illuminate it all. This is how the problem of building a sermon out of our text shapes itself for us.

Keeping somewhat closely to the great subject of our text we may use as a theme the resemblance of Christ to Moses. Introduction: On the eve of the birth of our Savior we ought to be impressed by his own greatness and glory and by the blessedness of the saving work he came to do. That is the object of our text for to-day. It uses Moses, the greatest Old Testament person in showing us the glory of Jesus. Let us see then how

Moses Reflects the Greatness of Jesus.

- 1) *Both transmit covenants — Jesus the final one.*
- 2) *Both convey revelations — Jesus the highest.*
- 3) *Both are made mediators — Jesus the supreme one.*
- 4) *Both deserve faith — Jesus most of all.*

Holding closely to the significance of this last Sunday in Advent we may speak on

The Savior Prophet Whose Birthday is at Hand

- 1) The wonder of *his person*: "of thy brethren."
- 2) The glory of *his office*: "my words."
- 3) The blessedness of *our faith*: "unto him ye shall hearken."

Several ways present themselves by which we may arrive at a good theme. It is obvious that the text contains a *promise*, the one fulfilled at Bethlehem when the Savior was born. A theme embodying this thought works out admirably when we note that a promise can be received only by faith, and not to receive it by faith spurns the promise. — The Advent idea connected with this promise suggests *preparation*. This fits the text since it tells us what such preparation involves: readiness to hear, to believe, to receive, and thus to be blessed. — The idea of *joy* may be combined with the general subject of the text, as also presently we shall sing: "Joy to the world, the Lord has come!" The text plainly indicates the fountains of this Advent joy. — A number of saving *doctrines* lie embedded in our text. We may lift them into prominence, prefacing the theme with the observation that every Old Testament promise concerning the Savior's coming contains the great fundamental doctrines of our faith. To-day these are the very doctrines in which and by which we must fortify our faith, for unbelief rages against these doctrines and seeks to level them to the ground.

When God Promised the Prophet Like Unto Moses He Revealed the Great Doctrines of Salvation.

- I. *The Virgin Birth.*
- II. *Divine Inspiration.*
- III. *Atoning Mediation*
- IV. *Justifying Faith.*
- V. *Final Judgment.*

In regard to the second part note that Moses spoke and wrote by inspiration, and, most important of all, when God promised to put his words into Jesus' mouth (verbal inspiration of his oral utterances), he could not but provide a perfect means for preserving and transmitting his Son's utterances, for they were never meant merely for the few who heard Jesus speak, but for the men of all future ages (verbal written inspiration).

This brings us to the last method we desire to suggest for obtaining a theme and outline. Allowing the substance of this text to fill our minds, in connection with the conditions found in the churches and in the world of to-day, we drive home one or the other central truth. Here is one: Men are determined to stop with Moses, although he himself testifies of Christ (John 5, 46). They love the doctrine of works; they have no use for the doctrine of faith. They turn Jesus himself into a second Moses, no longer like Moses as a mediator, but identical with Moses as a mere law-giver. They actually convert the sweet Gospel of Salvation into stern demands of Law.

Stopping Short with Moses.

- I. Making a Moses out of Christ.*
- II. Converting Gospel into Law.*
- III. Substituting Horeb for Calvary.*
- IV. Rejecting faith for works.*
- V. Gaining Moses' condemnation in place of Jesus' pardon (John 5, 45).*

Along the same line lies the modern rejection of Jesus as the Son of God and Bearer of the world's sin, and his acclamation instead as a great, yet only human, teacher. Even modern Jewish rabbis accept such a Jesus, and they are joined by deistic Free Masons, rampant nationalists, and the mobs of pseudo-scientific evolutionists. They would rob us of our blessed Advent and Christmas joy. Let us learn again

What God Meant when he Promised us a Prophet Like unto Moses.

His entire Word tells us, in particular also and most fully that Prophet himself. He meant

- I. His own eternal Son.*
- II. That Son as our heavenly Mediator.*
- III. That Son as our final Revelator.*
- IV. That Son as our only Savior.*

Woe to those who degrade him and try to make him less!
Blessed all they who exalt, trust, and worship him!

CHRISTMAS

Micah 5, 2-4

There are two prominent Christmas texts in the Old Testament, Is. 9, 6-7, and our text, much like the two in the New Testament, Matth. 1, 18 etc., and Luke 2, 1 etc. Both of these Old Testament texts are so satisfactory because they foretell *the wondrous birth* in the plainest terms, and then declare *the divine greatness of the Child thus born*. Our text is even plainer on the first point than the Isaiah text, for in a significant way it refers to the Savior's mother, "she which travaileth," omitting any reference to a father. Moreover, the very birth-place is clearly named at this early date, for Micah's activity lies between 756 and 697 B. C. This makes our prophet a contemporary of Isaiah, with whose prophecies those of Micah have a close connection, and joins him also with the later years of Hosea and Amos.

The real Christmas content of our text is what every preacher desires in the exposition offered him. The setting of the text, and the details concerning the people who first heard its message, are quite secondary in a study for sermon purposes. Hence we add only a few observations.

Like Isaiah Micah sees Judah doomed to exile and to further oppressions. The rule of king Ahaz (Micah 1, 1), the only king who ever actually closed up the Temple, is all that needs to be mentioned here. The wicked folly of the northern kingdom, Israel, as distinguished from Judah, met its fate during Micah's own time. Against this dark and hopeless background our prophet, like Isaiah, sets the wondrous promise of the divine Deliverer and his never-ending

rule of salvation. Our prophet does this in three addresses, each of which he formally marks by the introductory word: "Hear." The first, chapters 1-2, deals with Judah's rejection and her restoration; the second, chapters 3-5, with Judah's deepest humiliation and her highest exaltation; and the third, chapters 6-7, with the way of salvation for Judah. In the second address there are two prophetic announcements of Judah's highest exaltation, each set against the dark picture of her sin and punishment. The first, 4, 1-2, describes the exaltation of the Temple mount above all the mountains of the earth, many nations coming unto it. The second, our Christmas text, reveals the birth of Judah's incomparable Ruler, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, who shall be great unto the ends of the earth. Thus actually in our text we have the golden pinnacle of all the utterances of this great prophet. What he shows us, right in the midst of man's dreadful sin, when the blackness of its guilt actually overflows, is the divine grace, superior to it all, triumphantly carrying its plan of salvation into effect — "Christ, the Savior, is born,"

"At Bethlehem in David's town,
As Micah did of old make known;
'Tis Jesus Christ, your Lord and King,
Who doth to all salvation bring."

2. But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Juda, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

The deepest degradation of Judah shall be reached when her "judge" (v. 1), i. e. her ruler who has the authority to act as judge, shall be struck with a rod upon the cheek, and shall thus be completely humiliated and disgraced. This is a striking figure

of abject helplessness, beneath a tyrant's hand, and it shows to what depths the nation shall descend. During a period thus marked the first great step in realizing the Lord's wonderful plan for final deliverance will be taken. — There is a marked correspondence between the first word in our text, *v'aththah*, **But thou**, and the same word *v'aththah* in 4, 8. In 4, 8 the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem; and in our verse the King is promised who shall establish that kingdom. His birthplace shall not be Jerusalem, the capital of Judah and the royal city, for the historical reason that Judah shall then not have a king. David's regal line will be without a representative upon the throne. A stranger will occupy the place of power, Herod the Idumean, a descendant of Esau, made king by the anti-Jewish power of Rome. In the year 37 B. C. he captured Jerusalem, slew his leading adversaries there, including the whole Sanhedrim, except two, and thus established himself. Thus indeed the judge of Israel was smitten with a rod upon the cheek. The last Asmonean prince had fallen. As when God first gave to Israel the glorious Davidic line of kings, calling the shepherd lad from Bethlehem's flocks, so it shall be again — **Beth-lehem Ephratah**, the home of David when God first called him, shall furnish the King who shall be both David's son and David's Lord. "Bethlehem" is a compound, printed in our text in the A. V. with a hyphen, in the Hebrew *Beth-lechem*, and means "House of Bread," "Breadhouse." This name is frequently given an allegorical significance, since the Savior born here called himself the Bread of Life. Combined with the later name "Beth-lechem," is the more ancient one "Ephrath," or "Ephratah," "Fruit region," first applied to the locality in general, and then to the village itself. This second name is added here, as the commentators suggest, not to distinguish this Bethlehem from the one in Sebulon,

the reference to its smallness sufficing for that, but to increase the weight and solemnity of what is now said. Bethlehem of Judah is frequently mentioned in Holy Writ, in connection with Rachel and Benjamin, Boaz, David, and Joab. That God should choose such a tiny place for the birth of his Son is altogether in line with his ways: "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Cor. 1, 26-29. — Accordingly Micah draws attention to the insignificance of the place: though **thou be little among the thousands of Judah**, literally: "Small in regard to being among the thousands," i. e. rather small still to be listed among them. Keil and others read: "too small," but this would require a different word. The appositional *tsa'ir* is masculine to match the masculine *hayith* in *Beth (lehem)*. The *'alaphim*, or "thousands," are not towns with a 1000 inhabitants, but places with a 1000 families. Bethlehem had barely enough people to be placed in this list. The point for us to note is the contrast — Bethlehem so insignificant as to size and numbers, and yet so wonderfully important for the kingdom of God. — No one could have guessed it, but **out of thee** shall the Messiah come forth. This little village (κώμη, John 7, 42) shall be his birthplace. Sometimes Matth. 2, 6 is read as contradicting Micah: "Thou art *not the least* among the princes of Judah." There is no contradiction whatever. An author may be quoted in two ways, first by giving his very words with exactness, but secondly also, by stating his real or main thought. After Micah mentions the small size of Bethlehem,

he foretells the great event that shall happen in this little place, lifting Bethlehem into the most glorious prominence. This thought of Micah is brought out by the Jewish learned men in their way of quoting the prophet to Herod, saying in effect: "Though thou art little from a worldly point of view, thou art the reverse of least among Judah's princes, in the spiritual glory of being Messiah's birthplace." — We should note the emphasis on the two corresponding terms: *v'aththah*, **but thou** — and *mimm^oka*, **out of thee**, both drawing attention to the kind of place Bethlehem was. Now follows the astounding event that shall distinguish this place. In the Hebrew, **for me** precedes the verb **shall come forth**, making "for me" emphatic and prominent. It is Jehovah who is speaking through Micah to Bethlehem, and the thing both Bethlehem and all who read this Christmas prophecy must note is that the Messiah shall come forth for Jehovah. This coming forth is Jehovah's concern in a supreme sense, since it ushers in the climax of his great plan and purpose concerning men, centering in his kingdom of grace and salvation. — In the verb *yetsē* (piel from *yatsa*), **shall come forth**, the subject is held back; in fact no subject is mentioned, all that is furnished is a striking description of the person that is meant. Thus the emphasis is kept on the littleness of Bethlehem as over against the greatness of the person who shall forever distinguish this little place. He "shall come forth" means, of course, that he shall be born in this little town, as also the fulfillment of this prophecy shows; but the verb implies much more. Ordinary citizens are born in a town or village, and make that the scene of their life's activity. Once in a while a man like David, born in a small place, rises to national prominence. But the wondrous person of whom God here speaks through Micah "shall come forth" from his humble birthplace like the sun in its splendor with

healing in his wings for all the earth. Jesus, born in Bethlehem, a descendant of David born in the city of David, shall infinitely outshine David, yea, all the great men the world has ever seen. This is what lies in the verb here used: "he shall come forth unto me." A false literalness reduces terms like this to mean no more than when applied to ordinary men; the true literalness grasps the sense actually meant by the inspired writers and fully set forth by them.

The Lord might have said: there shall come forth for me "a ruler over Israel"; instead, he uses no subject, but adds an infinitive combined with *lamed*. This infinitive also has no subject. Both omissions are intended to put all the stress on the predicate of the infinitive. We may put it thus: A certain person shall come forth from the little town of Bethlehem, a certain person for to be a ruler over Israel. The infinitive *lihyoth* is thus not used in the fashion of a relative clause, as Keil thinks, and thus as practically the subject of *yetze*. Our English translation does that, just because it is rather helpless in exactly rendering the Hebrew. The great thing we are told is that a wondrous person shall come forth from tiny Bethlehem, and we are to be impressed by the kind of person he will be. — Yet the first item in the description which now follows in the form of a predicate is not so startling: he is **to be ruler in Israel**. The usual Hebrew construction is *mashal* followed by *b^e*, "to rule over." Hence here not: to be ruler *in* Israel, but *over* Israel. If nothing more were added we might think of some great earthly king for the Jewish nation, like David, or his son Solomon. But more is added. So we may at once say that **Israel**, of course, means first of all the people or nation, named after its great progenitor Israel. Yet we must not forget that the Scriptures in various places lay stress on the true Israel, as distinguished from the mere physical descendants of Jacob, and then they mean the people

who have the faith of the old patriarch, true believers, who alone constitute the Messiah's spiritual kingdom on earth, to the exclusion of all others. Among the Jewish nation the Messiah would thus have his beloved subjects over whom he would rule in grace and mercy, but the true Israel would include all those also who in future ages joined this chosen band by faith, no matter to what nation or tribe they might physically belong. In a way Jesus reigns also over all unbelievers, but over these with a rod of iron, eventually to dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel (Ps. 2, 9); not as the king whom they acknowledge, but as the king against whom they rebel and before whom they shall go down in utter defeat. — The remarkable thing about the ruler here prophesied is now added: **and his** (not the relative "whose") **goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.** The Jewish rabbis down to the present day, as well as all rationalists, who are determined to shut out the preexistence of Christ, and anything miraculous in his person, origin, and appearance, make these words mean that the Messiah shall be a descendant of the old Davidic family which reaches back to patriarchal days. The utter shallowness of this twist of *quidproquo*, as Keil says, appears at once when we note that every Jew has the same origin, for all of them descend from the patriarchs, and thus from Abraham. If this prophecy says no more of Israel's wonderful Ruler, it actually says nothing. David himself was born in Bethlehem and descended from Abraham. Thus this piece of rationalistic exegesis flattens out of itself. — The exegesis of von Hofmann and those who follow him must likewise be rejected. These men indeed hold fast the plural in **his goings forth**, which cannot be reduced to a mere majestic plural in poetic language, or to a substitute for the general idea of origin. But von Hofmann makes this plural mean the progressive steps during the Old

Testament era; Kleinert thinks of the intervening births leading up to the Messiah; A. Pfeiffer of every notable prophecy; and M. Reu of the entire Old Testament development, the *Heilsgeschichte* since Abraham, perhaps even down to the promise to Eve in Paradise. All these interpretations take *motsa'oth* in an unnatural sense. They make putty out of the term, twisting it now this way, now that. All of these interpretations fight shy also of the full meaning of *mime 'olam*, **from everlasting**; they are afraid to go back into eternity. Von Hofmann, who has misled so many, has an utterly false conception of Christ as the Son of God. He thinks that only because of the birth from the Virgin Mary Christ is υἱὸς θεοῦ that the Logos in John's Prolog signifies the Gospel; that the *Mal'ak Yaveh* was a created angel; and, to top it all off, that God revealed himself as triune from all eternity simply because of what he intended to do in time. No wonder Philippi raises the question of Arianism in regard to this teaching of von Hofmann (*Glaubenslehre* II, 217). The pity is that a man like this has influenced so many; yet they should have known better, and are certainly not without guilt in yielding to that influence.

Let us note first of all that *motsa'oth* (the fem. plural of *motsa'*) is derived from *yatsa'*, the very verb found in the first half of our verse: "he shall come forth" (*yetse'*) from Bethlehem. Now we learn that the wonderful person who is to come forth from Bethlehem has had many previous **goings forth**. These, of course, were not births or incarnations like the one to be at Bethlehem, but acts by which he personally came forth and manifested himself. Among them we list the appearances of the *Mal'ak Yaveh* (the Angel of Jehovah, who is himself called *Yahveh*), the pillar of cloud and of fire that accompanied the Israelites through the desert, the burning bush that Moses saw, etc. These goings forth reach

back and include creation itself, for it is the Logos of whom we read: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made," John 1, 3. And this Logos "was made flesh, and dwelt among us," v. 14, i. e. came forth from Bethlehem, as Micah foretold. More than this, back of creation lies the counsel of God regarding our salvation, for the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, Rev. 13, 8, and we ourselves were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, Eph. 1, 4. Wherever and whenever during the long Old Testament ages, in creation, and before creation, the Son of God stepped forth in making and in executing the marvelous plans of God, we have the "goings forth" here named by Micah. They have indeed been **from of old, from everlasting.** Literally the last expression reads: "from days of eternity." Because our poor minds are bound fast to the notion of time, and cannot conceive of eternity as timelessness (which it really is), even the Scriptures thus accommodate themselves to our weakness, and use time terms when they speak to us of eternity; yet in Rev. 10, 6 we read: "And swear . . . that there should be time no longer." — We certainly must agree with Gerhard's *Locci*, III, ch. X, sec. 148, that our passage ascribes the divine and essential attribute of eternity to the Messiah and thus declares him to be both God and man in one person. Gerhard adds that our passage proves also the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. Quenstedt does the same in *Theologia Did.-Pol.*, ed. of 1696, p. 380. This exegesis, however, ignores the plural in "goings forth," the connection of this plural with the preceding verb "shall come forth," and the plain fact that our passage does not deal with the Messiah's essential relation to the Father, but with his saving activity all through the prior ages and back into eternity. We stop then on the sure ground, that here we have

revealed, in connection with the Incarnation in Bethlehem, the divinity, the eternity, and the wondrous saving activity of the Logos. In connection with the celebration of his birth these are the great facts for us to present and unfold anew for the faith and joy of our hearers.

3. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

In the previous verse God spoke in the first person; in verse 3 the prophet speaks of God in the third person. The change is merely formal. The reticence in the further revelation continues—we are told much, yet not everything.—**Therefore**, *laken* = *entsprechend solchem Verlauf der Dinge*. The connective introduces no new fact in the words: **he will give them up**, *yithth^enem*, from *nathan*, *preisgeben*, in the sense of allowing their enemies to triumph over them. This was said in verse 1, and more fully in 4, 9 etc. The prophet's "therefore" takes this thought up once more and compresses it all into one Hebrew word: *yithth^enem*. The suffix for "them" refers to Israel in general. The fact that this giving them up is due to their guilt and sin, is not stated here, since the prophet has already made this very clear in previous sections. Here the advance of thought lies in the promise just made concerning the divine Ruler that shall arise from Bethlehem. While "the giving up" is due on the one hand to fully deserved punishment, on the other hand it is combined with God's highest plans of grace. That is why Bethlehem was to be the scene of the Ruler's birth, not the capital Jerusalem. Judah shall be without a native king, a usurper shall dominate over her.—The emphasis thus lies on the words: **until the time that she which travaileth hath brought**

forth. This implies that "the giving up" is general, and refers to no specific instance when the people will be abandoned to their enemies. There will be a succession of humiliations, up to the time of the promise. When king Ahaz combined with Assyria, Is. 7; 2 Kgs. 16, 7 etc., the fateful chain of distressing events began, with one oppression after another. But all this would lead to a glorious termination. In the midst of penalties God would prepare grace and deliverance. Yet the Jews would not rise again to political independence and a powerful statehood. God's plan of grace ran on a far higher level. The divine Ruler promised to Judah would establish an everlasting spiritual kingdom. This was the point toward which God's gracious plans headed. And this is connected here with the prophecy just made concerning Bethlehem, i. e. the Incarnation, for the terminal point is the time when "she which travaileth hath brought forth." There is no article with *yoledah* (cf. *yoledeth* and *yoled*, from *yalad*, "to give birth"), hence "one travailing." The verb *yaladah* is perfect, the pausal form of the 3rd pers. sing. fem.: "has travailed," or "has given birth." The notable thing here is the specific and peculiar mention of the mother, with the marked and complete absence of a father. Let us bear in mind that among men descent is counted from the father. This is true also of Jesus when his human line of descent is traced, as in Matth. 1, Luke 3, and passages like Rom. 1, 3. But this line of fathers ends with Mary, "of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ," Matth. 1, 16; so that Joseph is added only "as was supposed" the father of Jesus, Luke 3, 23, really merely his legal, and in no way his natural father. Micah's prophecy has already revealed the eternity of the Ruler that should arrive in Bethlehem, and here is the other side of that revelation: this Ruler shall have no natural human father, he shall be "made of a woman," Gal. 4, 4, as no human

being ever was before or after him. The matter is stated very simply, as such things are always done in Holy Writ, but none the less with the greatest exactness and definiteness. — The two terms *yoledah yaladah* show that the birth of Jesus occurred in the natural way. Mary travailed, and brought forth her first-born son, Jesus. The old notion, which crept even into our Confessions (the Latin only), that this birth as a birth was miraculous, and took place *clauso utero*, with no birth-pains, the child not passing through the mouth of the womb as in regular birth, but instantaneously through the walls of the womb, just like the glorified body of Jesus passed through the rock walls of the sealed sepulcher, is in plain conflict with the two words of Micah on this birth.

The results of all rationalistic exegesis are determined in advance. Certain supposed natural laws and scientific deductions shut out everything miraculous and supernatural. Every Scripture statement is therefore maltreated to harmonize with these supposed laws and deductions. It is only a question as to the most plausible method of procedure; the result is predetermined. So here. A human being must have both a natural human father and a natural human mother; therefore Jesus cannot have been born of a virgin. The Incarnation of the Son of God is a myth. There is no Son of God, and there could be no miraculous conception. Jesus is Joseph's natural son, and Mary conceived him in fornication. Thus a smear of dirty foulness is drawn across the entire Christmas celebration, and our holy joy is turned into disgust. This is the so-called exegesis of the two Socini, and of all their modern followers, who merely revamp the old lies and dress them up in modern terminology. — Now Christmas is not the time for polemics on this subject. The preacher's great task is to proclaim the positive truth with all its blessed implications. So at best only a word can be said in passing against the

falsehoods of rationalism. Yet the preacher must himself know just how false and lying these denials of the virgin birth of Jesus are. Everyone of them simply substitutes what some rationalist to-day thinks possible for what God by divinely inspired men told us would take place, and again told us did take place. One square look at the two ends all hesitation and doubt. There is the plain statement in Is. 7, 14; and still plainer, and supremely glorious, in Is. 9, 6-7; then our text must be added. Even without the New Testament light to help us these passages declare that God's eternal Son, incarnate, born of a virgin, shall rule an everlasting kingdom of grace and glory.

Even some Christian commentators rationalize. Old Theodoret began it, and Calvin followed him. One is surprised to find A. Pfeiffer, in his work on our line of texts, doing the same thing. They make this travailing mother signify the people of Judah. Pfeiffer is bold enough to read the "virgin" in Is. 7, 14 in this sense. In our passage the reason assigned is, that in 4, 10 Judah is said to be travailing; and we are told that this idea was quite current at the time of Isaiah and Micah. If this were true, if the travailing one in our text refers back to Judah travailing in 4, 10, then the prophet would have been compelled to use the definitive article *hayyoleadah*, not merely *yoledah*, "that one (mentioned before) that travaileth," and not merely "a certain one that travaileth." Still worse, in the next clause of our text we read of "the remnant of his (the Ruler's) brethren." It is preposterous, in consecutive statements, to make the same people first a mother, and then brethren. Worst of all, this travailing would then be only a figure of speech, signifying that after a period of anguish joy would follow at last. From travailing in the sense of prolonged national distress no individual, like the Messiah, can be born. Yet that Messiah as an individual is placed before us by the possessive "*his*

brethren," and by the glorious description of his reign in verse 4. Yet an outrageous exegesis like this, which violates every canon of interpretation, still finds followers. And these men, after they rob us of the divine birth in our text, still expect us to preach a Christmas sermon on the empty shell they have left us. What Micah really says is this: a human mother shall in due time give birth to Israel's divine Ruler. The prophet puts the emphasis, and that rightly, on this Ruler and what he shall do, not on the mother who shall bear him. It is enough to designate her as "she which travaileth." On the one side we thus have the eternal Ruler, ruling in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and on the other side a human mother travelling and giving him birth. All certainly is plain: one who is eternal could not be born in the ordinary way; his conception and birth could be only as it actually was: "conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary" — a human mother indeed, but no human father. All rationalistic and all rationalizing interpretation are perversions, and dare not read the words of inspiration as they stand and according to what they plainly say.

Micah now briefly foretells the blessings which the birth of the Messiah shall produce, first the saving effect upon his own nation, and secondly his spiritual reign in general. — **Then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.** There is only the *vav consecutivum*, which may be translated "and," instead of "then." A distinction is made between the Ruler's **brethren** and **the children of Israel**. This means that the former are members of the tribe of Judah, and belong to the southern kingdom, while the latter are from the ten tribes, or the northern kingdom. Only **a remnant** is mentioned, because the rest shall have perished in the judgments that shall descend upon them for their

disobedience. Even during Micah's time the captivity and destruction of the northern kingdom began. Now God's promises that a change shall come when the heavenly Ruler appears. This is not a political change, the restoration of an earthly kingdom for all the Jewish tribes in Palestine. That is a chiliastic notion current again to-day. Many imagined it was on the eve of realization, as a result of the world war, when Palestine came under English rule, and a Jew was made its governor. When this expectation failed, they postponed their hopes, but held fast to this millennial dream of a restored earthly kingdom of the Jewish nation as a whole — this in the face of the Scriptures, which know of no such thing, and of the open facts of present-day Judaism, which all point to the contrary. Israel's great messianic Ruler shall establish, and did establish, a spiritual kingdom. — The remnant of Judah that shall return when this Ruler arrives with his blessings are the Jews of Judah who shall accept their heavenly Ruler in true faith. The verb **shall return**, *yeshubun*, from *shub*, signifies a spiritual return in faith to Jehovah, as Keil rightly says, and this in spite of Reu's contradiction. Any physical return, beyond the gathering of such believers around the Messiah in the Christian Church, is wholly out of the question. — The translation **unto** the children of Israel must be corrected. For the ten tribes were merged in the Gentiles. They cannot constitute a rallying-point to which others may gather. The entire idea is foreign to the Scriptures. While *'al* often means "unto," its other meaning is "together with," the German *samt*. Keil furnishes the complete linguistic information on this point, see also E. Koenig, *Woerterbuch*, the details of which need not detain us here. From the scattered and merged ten tribes many shall likewise turn in faith to their great Ruler. Thus in the Christian Church these Jewish believers shall be

brought together again, as the true people of Jehovah. All the conversions during the apostolic days (and they were many indeed), and afterwards through the extended preaching of the Gospel of Christ, are here foretold. Read Is. 11, and note verses 11-12: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." Compare the striking list on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2, 8 etc. In this prophecy of Micah are combined all the returns in faith of all the Jews during the New Testament era. In part this prophecy is still being fulfilled. And thus (οὐτως), i. e. while many are hardened and lost, shall "all Israel" be saved, namely the true Israel of all the New Testament age, believing in their heaven-sent Ruler "who is Christ the Lord."

4. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

The prophet's description is now rounded out. Where we have heard thus far only that the Messiah shall be a Ruler over Israel, now we are shown the beneficence and greatness of his rule. **And he shall stand** gives dramatic color to the picture of this Ruler who shall exercise the highest authority and power. His real work is expressed by the next verb: **and feed**, *ra'ah*, pasture, like a shepherd does his flock. This is the term which really characterizes the Savior's reign. He leads his people upon green pastures; he feeds and nourishes their souls with

his Word and Sacrament. Two thoughts are here combined, that of quiet, restful safety, and that of abundant nourishment. And yet we must not press the figure of the shepherd here, since the prophet's image is that of a mighty, glorious ruler. It is Jesus' royal rule which for his people is described here as feeding or pasturing. — Hence also the addition: **in the strength of the LORD.** To rule in that strength is to have and exercise it. Remember that this ruler according to Micah shall be born of a human mother, and shall thus be true man. His ruling in Jehovah's strength, therefore, signifies that his human nature shares in the divine attribute of strength. — The matter is made still stronger and clearer by the apposition: **in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.** Here **majesty**, in the sense of highness or exaltation, is added to the power just mentioned, and this the majesty that God connects with his **name**, i. e. with the revelation he makes of himself. Every word and deed by which God makes himself known in any way to us shows that he is infinitely above any and all his creatures. That is **the majesty of his name.** And this majesty, Micah says, shall characterize our heavenly Ruler's dealings. Power and majesty naturally go together, the one involving the other. — When we read of Jesus; as we do here, that Jehovah is **his God**, this, too, refers to his human nature. Augustine puts it thus: "Under whom I also am as man." On the cross Jesus himself exclaimed: "My God, my God," etc.; and to Mary Magdalene he said, marking a decided difference: "I ascend . . . to my God, and your God." John 20, 17. God is our God, first because we are the creatures of his hand, called into being by his almighty will; and secondly, because by his grace he has delivered us from our sins. In the case of Jesus neither of these points applies. Of his own volition the Son assumed our creature nature, and thus

brought about the relation expressed in the words "his God." Conceived and born without sin, there is no thought of grace in this relation of Jesus to his God, nothing but the perfection of obedience during the days of his humiliation, and the perfection of glory in his exaltation. It is the latter that Micah here sees: the God-man wielding the power and majesty of God also according to his human nature on his glorious throne in heaven.

The result for his people shall be the blessedness of peace: **and they shall abide.** These are first of all the believing sons of Judah. But to them are added the believers from the ten tribes, which practically means from the Gentiles, since the tribes were merged with the Gentiles. The verb *yashab* means "to settle," "to dwell," and thus to **abide**, i. e. with no one to destroy them. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the little flock of Jesus, nor shall any man pluck them out of his hand. This, of course, is comprehensive and general. The believers shall indeed bear the cross, be persecuted, and suffer tribulation in many ways during the course of time; but they shall always abide and continue as a Church to dwell among the nations, preserved, kept, and comforted by the power and the majesty of their heavenly King. — The final clause states the extent of our Ruler's power and majesty: **for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.** Now, or "at this time," is not meant of some certain date, but of the time of his exalted reign when his Word and grace are carried everywhere. The idea is not merely that his power as such shall extend to the ends of the earth, but also that it shall be acknowledged thus far. For to **be great** signifies both the exercise of superior power and its acknowledgment in humble submission. In every land he shall eventually have his subjects and true worshippers. Some commentators think only of the enemies which the great Ruler shall hold in

check, but this is too narrow and too negative. We must think especially of his adoring subjects; in their hearts he shall be great indeed.

SUGGESTIONS

In this rich and beautiful text Micah foretells *the Savior's Birth at Bethlehem*. We may call this in a general way the subject of the text. The preacher may be tempted to halt at this subject, and to use it in lieu of a theme. He may even think that it answers as a theme. That, however, would be a pity, the more with so fine a text on so grand an occasion. The preacher who stops short and preaches only on the subject of this text makes, in reality, whether he realizes it or not, his theme: *Something* on the Savior's Birth at Bethlehem. Any theme of this sort simply reveals the preacher's inefficiency and utter homiletical helplessness; for even a poor Sunday school teacher is able to say *something* on a text when that text itself already furnishes *something*. — We may indeed use the subject, but only embodied in a theme that constitutes a proposition, with a grammatical subject and predicate either stated outright or at least implied. And in this proposition the specific direction must be stated in which the sermon is to take us; and there must be indicated also the point at which the proper split for the division is to be made. — A fair theme is secured, in the line of the subject stated, when we use the entire proposition: **The Prophet Micah Foretells the Savior's Birth at Bethlehem**. This means that we are going to confine ourselves to this one prophecy of Micah, and that this is the direction of our sermon. It means also that Micah's foretelling embraced a number of very noteworthy things, and that we propose to take these up in order. This is the division we propose in the present case. So we may dwell on what Micah foretold of the place, the time, the human mother, the lowliness, etc. If we follow the order of these points as laid down in the text, the outline will be of the ordinary analytic kind; if, however, we rearrange and fix an order of our own, perhaps also combine thoughts separate in the text, to whatever extent we do this, our outline becomes synthetic, and thus of a higher order. In the outline before us there is no effort at embellishment, it is straight-forward and matter-of-fact, and that is all. For festival occasions we desire something on a higher plane. — There is a dramatic feature in the text: the Lord himself addresses Bethlehem: "And thou,

Bethlehem Ephratah!" This suggests the theme: **The Lord's Great Promise to Little Bethlehem Ephratah of Old**, and allows us to present all the essential parts of that promise, together with, and in the light of, the fulfillment. There are especially two parts that demand attention in this promise, the one dealing with the person, the other with the work of the Ruler of Judah, who was to come out of Bethlehem Ephratah. So we may formulate: The Lord promised to Bethlehem I. His own Son in human flesh as the Ruler of Israel; II. That Son's rule in majesty and strength for the salvation of Judah and the ends of the earth.

The attractive thing about this text is the name Bethlehem Ephratah, and many will linger over it in thought and in one way or another embody it in a theme, for instance in one like this: **The Christmas Glory that Centers in Bethlehem Ephratah**. I. The glory of the Promise that singled out Bethlehem. II. The glory of the Birth that occurred in Bethlehem. III. The glory of the Savior who came forth from Bethlehem. IV. The glory of the Salvation that spread so far from Bethlehem. — Here the auxiliary concept of *glory* is made the point of cleavage. There are a number of similar concepts which invite the preacher's skill. We may speak of the *Christmas miracle* that took place in Bethlehem. We may say that Bethlehem Ephratah was the *center* from which the Christmas joy radiates. There are also certain *contrasts* that strike us here: so tiny a place, so great a miracle; so lowly a mother, so glorious a Son; so ordinary an event (only a child's birth), so stupendous a result. — With all this in mind we may also fittingly ask: **Why Does the Whole Christian World Sing To-day: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"?** Then we may state the reasons in some order that appeals to us and does justice to these reasons: 1) God's promise centers there; 2) Our Savior was born there; 3) Our hearts find their sweetest joy there.

An examination of the outlines offered for this text in homiletical works shows not a few of very inferior order. Some of them descend to categories for the division, i. e., to the ordinary questions that can be asked concerning any subject. Categories may do for the preacher's workshop, where the shavings and sawdust lie around as he fashions the product of his study; they will not do for the pulpit where the perfect product is to appear. Here is one from Deichert on the Ruler: 1) Whence he comes; 2) What he wants; 3) Will he succeed? One by Reu is no better: **The Child in the Manger**. 1) Whence it came; 2) What it wishes to be for us to-day. Far better than this primer work is the effort of Ritze: **Bethlehem, the Center God has Prepared for Our Christmas Celebration**.

I. The place where the promised son of David was born. II. The place where the Son of God was revealed. III. The place where his scattered flock gathers (here using the shepherd idea that appear in the word "feed").—There is too slight a reference to King David in our text, and therefore a parallel, like Reu's: "Christ the true David," comparing their lowliness, their divine election, and their blessed rule, is certainly not appropriate for this text.—A few have tried to allegorize Bethlehem, making it a picture of the Christian Church, or of the Christian's heart. It suffices to say that the word in the text means neither, and the great actual facts here recorded by prophecy tower far above any little figurative turn we may find pleasing to the imagination.

We conclude our suggestions with two outlines slightly altered in translation. John Quandt offers:

Micah's Message Concerning the Christchild.

- I. *His goings forth from of old.*
- II. *His birth of a humble virgin.*
- III. *His rule in majesty and blessing.*

W. Ziethe in *Siloah* asks us to open the prophet Micah's book at the Christmas page, and there to view the poverty of the Christmas place, the dawn of the Christmas day, and the majesty of the Christmas child.

THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS*

Is. 63, 7-16

In order to preach in a satisfactory manner on this text, not only the text itself, but also its wider context must be carefully studied. It will not do for the preacher to lose himself in the details of the text; to theorize in modern fashion on the history here summarized, perhaps coming to no positive conclusion, or to a wrong one; to read in general a pious sense into the phrases of the text, attach such loose Christian admonitions as happen to come to mind at this season of the church year, and thus to drift away from the real and mightily serious import of what this text conveys. This kind of sham exegesis and inefficient homiletics make the work of preaching on Old Testament texts, and the listening to such preaching, a burden to the honest Christian soul. A sample of this sort of exegetical and homiletical treatment of our text is the work of A. Pfeiffer, embellished with considerable learning, but inadequate throughout.

To understand our text properly we certainly must note its position in the grand epic which forms the second half of Isaiah's prophetic book. This epic, built like an imposing cathedral, is constructed of triads. There are three grand revelations; each of

* Often there is no Sunday after New Year on the calendar. Even when there is we often use the text for the Epiphany festival on the Sunday after New Year. That releases the text for the Sunday after New Year, Ps. 73, 23-28. The author suggests that in such case Ps. 73, 23-28 be used either for the Sunday after Christmas or for Sylvester Eve, the last evening of the year. If Ps. 73, 23-28 is used for the Sunday after Christmas, then Is. 63, 7-16 is excellent for Sylvester Eve.

these is again divided into three, making nine; and each of these nine again has three parts, making twenty-seven in all. Compare the text for The Third Sunday in Advent. Isaiah sang first of the deliverance from Babylon through Cyrus, 40-48; secondly, of the deliverance through Christ, 49-57; thirdly, of the eternal deliverance in the world to come, 58-66. This eternal deliverance is presented in three parts: in 58-60 we are shown the essential of repentance, which alone will be followed by the promised glorification; in 61-63, 6 we are shown the consummation of this glory, combined with the destruction of Israel's foes; finally 63, 7-66 display the final order of things, the rejection of Israel, the reception of a remnant, and the admission of the Gentiles. Our text, 63, 7-16, opens up this last section, built also as a triad, and highly dramatic. A prayer is addressed to God in behalf of all the Israelites, 63, 7-64, 12; God gives answer, by rejecting the obdurate Israelites, delivering the remnant of the faithful, and accepting the Gentiles, ch. 65; and then follows the destruction of the old, and the birth and glory of the new church, ch. 66. Or, putting it tersely: 1) a prayer; 2) God's answer; 3) the final division.

Some things are very plain when in the light of what has been set forth we carefully survey our text and think of it as intended to mark for us the close of the secular year. This is not at all an ordinary text that merely combines the praise of God's past goodness (7-9) with acknowledgment of Israel's sins (10-14) and petition for return of grace and favor (15-16) to which 17 might be added), so that all we need is a simple process of application, 1) voicing our praise at the end of a church year; 2) confessing our sins; 3) asking God's further grace. That indeed — and one is amazed! — is what A. Pfeiffer tells the preacher to do with this text. He skeletonizes: What shall we pray to-day? 1) Utter a prayer of thanks and praise

to God; 2) A prayer of contrition and repentance; 3) A humble call for grace and mercy. He repeats the outline of Huettenrauch: How shall the Christian leave the old year? 1) With joyful praise for divine mercy; 2) With painful acknowledgment of his sins; 3) With fervent prayer for grace. This entire view and treatment of the text is a pitiful piece of superficiality, which looks as if those guilty of it had not read beyond the actual words of the text, and had not even read those words with care. It is worse — a total perversion of the true import of this fervent cry of one of God's people of old. The man who prays here is not placed at the end of some briefer section of time, but at the end of all the preparatory work of God, and on the threshold of the great consummation of God's plans regarding his people. It is absurdly cheap to parallel such an end with the end of an ordinary year. The man who prays here sees his people prostrate under the wheels of God's inexorable judgment. God has indeed been good to this people. Besides countless individual blessings he has prepared them a wondrous redemption. The prayer acknowledges all that with due praise to God. But this people, which God treated as his own people and children, rebelled against him and vexed God's Spirit, and thus forced their great Benefactor and Redeemer to be their enemy and to fight against them. Nor is the situation in the prayer that of an incidental rebellion, and thus a case that might be remedied and passed over. No; this rebellion is the final outcome of all God's gracious and kindly dealings with this people. It is thus that they are now under the terror of God's judgment, and this prayer like a heartrending cry rises to God in intercession for these terrible transgressors. Let us note too that we have only the prayer, in fact only the first part of that. That leaves us with the question: What will God do in answer to this intercession? Chapter 65 tells us. This time

God will *not* turn in mercy again; he will reject these rebellious bastards, who are not children; only a truly repentant remnant will be received again in mercy. That is the real story of the text. No cheap, little application like Pfeiffer's can be drawn from it for ourselves at the close of a year. The text is entirely too tremendous for that. This is a mountain towering beyond the clouds, not a mere hill along the road. The thing that here looms up before us is *the final warning*, that if we, or any one else, continue to receive the grace of God in vain, our obduracy and rebellion will forfeit God's grace forever. Thousands are doing this very thing to-day, and they cannot escape their doom. Only a remnant of Israel was saved, all the rest were cast away for ever. The thing is before our eyes in the outcast Jews at this very moment. That is the heart of this text—a tremendous fact, which, especially at the end of a church year, with millions even in the nominal churches repeating Israel's folly, we had better face, with our knees in the dust, and our faces bowed down to the ground.

- 7. I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praise of the LORD, according to all the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.**

We will not assume that the person who here says **I will mention**, etc. is the prophet himself. There is no intimation to that effect in the entire prayer. Nor can we agree with Aug. Pieper and others that this intercessor personifies Israel, for all through the prayer he speaks of his people, and his very act of intercession marks him as an individual

over against his own nation. This unnamed person is merely a dramatic voice, introduced as such by the prophet in order that God's answer may be as direct as one person speaking to another. — The prayer begins with recitation, and then turns into the most fervent appeal to God. But from the start this intercessor for Israel is addressing God as he recites what God has done. Our survey of the second half of Isaiah should make clear to us that the time in mind for this prayer is not some point in the general history of Israel, but the day when Israel's final fate is about to be decided by God, i. e. at the dawn of the New Testament era, as this was revealed to the prophet. God's answer to the prayer removes any doubt on this point.

The verb I will mention, *'azkir*, 1st pers. imperfect hiphil from *zakar*, signifies either: "I will bring to mind," or, as befits the object here: "I will utter with praise." There is no preliminary explanation of any kind. All at once, in highly dramatic fashion, this voice rings out, and declares what it will say. The things it utters explain themselves to one who has followed Isaiah's epic thus far with an understanding heart. — The subject which this speaker takes up is put forward emphatically in the Hebrew, and is emphasized and made doubly prominent by means of an apposition. He will praise **the loving-kindnesses of the LORD**, *chasde Yahveh* namely (not "and") **the praises of the LORD**, *th^ehilloth Yahveh*. These two plurals should not be read as denoting the loving and praiseworthy acts of the Lord. The reason assigned for doing so, namely that a bestowal is mentioned in two following clauses, is unsound, for the verbs "hath bestowed on us," *g^emalanu*, and "hath bestowed on them," *g^emalam*, have their own objects. Neither the lovingkindnesses, nor the praises were "bestowed." These **lovingkindnesses** and **praises**

are not deeds or works of the Lord, although they involve divine actions. By the former we must understand the many gracious stirrings of God's heart, and by the latter the resulting songs of praise, when those kindly feelings of God are rightly understood. In its song of praise to Jehovah this voice is going to deal with these gracious feelings of the Lord, as subjects of praise for the Lord. — The emphasis lies on the manner in which this is going to be done: *k'e'al*, a compound preposition, **according to**, i. e. as accords with, and as befits, **all that the LORD hath bestowed on us**. This is how the lovingkindnesses, namely the praises, of the Lord are here to be voiced, so that the song shall harmonize with, and shall befit, all the many good things the Lord has done to his people. Here we have clear mention of the Lord's deeds, for *gamal* is the German *antun*, to do something for a person. That indeed is the true way to praise the lovingkindnesses of the Lord: attune the praise in fitting manner to all the gracious acts of the Lord. The little word **all** intimates that for Israel there were a host of such acts.

The second couplet repeats the contents of the first couplet, after the manner of Hebrew poetry, with poetic and illuminating variations. We thus see how the petitioner dwells on his great theme, his mind and heart being full of it. And as we listen to his lovely words our hearts, too, are filled. All the learned efforts of A. Pfeiffer in trying to make the first couplet refer to Judah, the second to Israel, and then finding historical contrasts between the couplets, is a waste of good gray matter, beautiful for confusion, but desert dust for any real purpose or use. — The first great subject "mentioned" by the voice was "the lovingkindnesses of the Lord"; now follows the second subject: **the great goodness toward the house of Israel**, literally "the greatness of the good," since

the neuter adjective *rab*, "much," "many," is used as a noun, and *tub* should be read concretely of benefaction. — Where at first the voice said "us" in a mere suffix to the verb, it now plainly declares: **toward the house of Israel.** There is no idea here of the northern kingdom called "Israel," in contrast to the southern called "Judah." One who has followed Isaiah's great epic, knows that here he is speaking of the entire nation in the entire course of its history, clear up to the New Testament era. "House of Israel" is the great family descended from Israel, the Jewish nation designated by its great name of honor. — The relative clause which follows parallels the one in the first couplet, only it is much richer and fuller. In the first the verb stands alone, thus emphasizing the Lord's acts of bestowal. In the second relative clause the same verb appears, taking up once more the Lord's acts, but now full stress is laid on the motives behind these acts. So we have again: **which he hath bestowed on them,** but now the sonorous, weighty, and significant addition: **according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.** The **mercies**, *rachamim* from *racham*, are the tender feelings, or pity, of the Lord; and **the multitude**, *rob* (comp. the previous *rab*) **of his lovingkindnesses**, *chasdayv*, the many gracious feelings of the Lord. Thus kindly pity, and unmerited grace and favor actuated the Lord during the entire old covenant period. From these motives his actions flowed in what he constantly did for his people. Or, to picture it more in Hebrew fashion, to these feelings the Lord's actions were attuned; they harmonized with these motives. Note incidentally that the same word opens and also closes this quartrain in the Hebrew: *chasdayv*, "lovingkindnesses" — *chasdajw*, "his lovingkindnesses." These are the two pillars between which the beautiful garlands of this verse are hung.

8. **For he said, Surely they *are* my people, children *that* will not lie: so he was their Savior.**
9. **In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and he carried them all the days of old.**

Verse 8 sets forth what the Lord in his loving-kindness thought and said; and verse 9 what in consequence he did. The two belong together. **For he said** states that the Lord, in the fashion of a man, voices his thought to himself. The lovingkindness of the Lord here puts itself into words. — **Surely** is the prefix *'ak* in decided affirmation. **They are my people**, is literally: “my people, these,” much like an exclamation. *Hemmah*, “these,” refers to the nation as such. **My people** is expressive of the close relation between Israel and the Lord, based on his gracious election of this nation in his great saving plan for the world. — To this is added *banim*, “sons,” or **children**, a term entwined with still more affection, showing how devoted the Lord was to Israel — “like as a father pitieth his children,” Ps. 103, 13. — In the statement: children that **will not lie**, not the foreknowledge of the Lord, but his loving hope and expectation is voiced, namely that these his chosen children would not disavow by their conduct what they had avowed by their confession. Israel, alas, most shamefully disappointed this loving hope of the Lord. — The result of this loving attitude of the Lord toward Israel is first of all put into the comprehensive statement: **so he was their Savior**, *moshi'a*, the hiphil participle substantivized, and a favorite term in the second half of Isaiah. The force of the *l^e* prefix is

hard to reproduce in English, it is like the German: *er ward ihnen zum Heiland*. This term **Savior** characterizes the Lord in his entire activity toward Israel, and must not be restricted to one or the other signal act of deliverance in Israel's history; note in v. 10 "all the days of old."

It is useless here to discuss the textual difficulties in v. 9, the original reading itself being in doubt. It seems we simply must substitute the *k'ri* (marginal reading): *lo*, spelled with *vav*, in the significance of *ipsi*, "for himself," in place of the *k'thib* (text reading): *lo*, spelled with *aleph*, meaning "no," or "not." With this negative in the text no one has been able to do anything with the sentence beyond forcing an odd sense into it. So we follow our English translators, who using the marginal reading translated: "**In all their affliction he was afflicted**, literally: "there was affliction *for himself*." The neuter adjective *tsar*, first with the suffix "their affliction," then without, is made a noun, and signifies "straitness," as when one is painfully and desperately hemmed in and pressed on every side. Used of the Lord the expression is highly anthropopathic, picturing God as suffering in a human way; yet it succeeds completely in making plain his love for Israel. Every affliction of theirs he felt as an affliction of his own. — In v. 8 the first two lines voice the Lord's thought, and the third records his action as according with that thought. Verse 9 is built similarly. The first line records the Lord's tender feeling, and the next three lines state what this feeling prompted the Lord to do for Israel. The statements are all comprehensive, and should not be read as applying to any one single act of God in particular, as for instance to the exodus from Egypt. **And the angel of his presence saved them** means in general what v. 8 has already told us: "so he was their Savior";

and we should note that "Savior," and "saved them," are both from *yasha'*. Only in v. 8 it is the Lord who acts as the Savior, and in v. 9 it is **the angel of his presence**, *mal'ak panayv*. This is the uncreated angel, otherwise called "the Angel of Jehovah," and identified with Jehovah himself. The term "Angel of the Presence" is not used elsewhere, yet it would be a false conclusion, for this reason not to refer it to the Son of God. The designation itself is clear, the genitive *panayv*, "his face," is expletive: "the Angel who is his Face, or Presence," in whom Jehovah's countenance shows itself. All through the Old Testament, in his dealings with Israel, God himself was their Savior, but it was the Son, the second person of the Godhead, in and through whom God wrought, and who on various occasions appeared visibly in exalted angelic form. When A. Pfeiffer says that Elijah, Elisha, and the sons of the prophets were "the Angel of the Presence" he denies the very thing here recorded, and substitutes a shallow opinion of his own. When others think of the visible pillar of cloud and of fire, they put one incident in place of scores. — The Angel of the Presence **saved** them, drew them back from the brink of destruction, lifted them out of the mire of trouble and distress, placed them in security, made them prosperous and great. — Because the verb "saved" includes so much, it is here expanded: **in his love and in his pity he redeemed them**, namely the Lord. The two phrases may be read as a hendiadys: "in his loving pity"; or, "in his pitying love." The term for **pity**, *chemlah*, is from the verb "to spare." The saving is now described as "redeeming," *ga'al*, "to buy back," *zurueckfordern aus fremder Beschlagnahme* (Koenig), to demand back from foreign seizure. The Lord did indeed redeem Israel thus again and again, demanding their release from tyrannical oppressors. — But the idea

of saving includes also placing and keeping in a condition of security and rest. So there is added: **and he bare them, natal**, "to lift up"; **and he carried them, nasa'**, as one first lifts up and then "carries securely" in his arms a little child. The double statement includes all the loving care Israel experienced at the Lord's hands. — This comes out plainly in the addition: **all the days of old, kol-y^eme 'olam**. Here is the place once more to note well where the prophet places us with this prayer, namely at the end of Israel's history as a nation, at the very end of the old covenant, and at the dawn of the new. That is the point of time from which the intercessor who is here shown us as praying looks back over his nation's history. **All the days** includes the entire past. The addition **of old** merely marks these days as extending very far back. Hence it is a mistake when A. Pieper restricts "all the days of old" to the desert sojourn of the twelve tribes under Moses. Still worse is the fancy of A. Pfeiffer, who thinks of the northern kingdom only, up to the time of the deportation into Assyria. Delitzsch, as well as Daechsel, offers no comment. — So these verses describe the entire inner history of Israel as God's chosen nation. The entire course of that history, up to the very end when the Lord had to reject this nation as a nation, is marked with a glorious array of deeds of love and blessing.

10. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit:

**therefore he was turned to be their enemy,
and he fought against them.**

In this verse the intercessor makes tragic confession of Israel's guilt, and states the inevitable consequences. — The connective *ve*, **but**, is adversative, made so by the thought. Instead of being grateful children, this people turned out rebels. — Our

version has the intransitive: **they rebelled**, *maru*, from *marah*, although this verb also takes an object. In fact, it is better to translate: "they resisted and vexed his holy Spirit," in the sense of resisting by vexing. The LXX have: "they disobeyed," yet the verb is much stronger, and really means: *sich straff, stramm, steif entgegensetzen* (Delitzsch, on Is. 3, 8), to brace oneself rigidly, tautly, stiffly against something. This describes what is theologically termed "wilful resistance" as distinguished from "natural resistance." Read Is. 5, 1-4. Wilful resistance is more than the natural outcome of man's inborn depravity. It is a devilish super-added rebellion, which, when the grace of God touches the soul with saving intent, smites it in the face and casts it off completely. Natural resistance struggles against grace, yet does not break away from it; wilful resistance does that very thing, and thus places itself beyond the reach of grace, with the determination to stay beyond its reach. How such a resistance can possibly arise in the heart while God's grace is working to win and save that heart, is a mystery no man can fathom. — The second verb: *'itsts^bbu*, the piel from *'atsab*, signifies "to grieve, or wound," and this by insulting. Compare Eph. 4, 30. The two verbs here used tell the terrible story of Israel. Stephen repeats the accusation: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye," Acts 7, 51. Note that Stephen made this charge at the end of the old covenant period. — There is no reason why **his holy Spirit**, properly printed with a capital, should not be read of the third person of the Godhead. Only a person can be vexed. "Thus Jehovah, and the Angel of his Presence, and the Spirit of his holiness, are distinguished as three persons. . . . Thus unmistakably the mystery of the triune Being of the One God is here indicated, which is revealed by the fulfillment of the New Testament

work of redemption." Delitzsch. All through the Scriptures the Spirit of the Lord is not merely his heart or mind. It is the third person of the Triune God, who also in the Old Testament times mediated God's grace to Israel, for which reason, too, he is here named.

Now the result of this wilful resistance: **therefore he was turned to be their enemy.** The connective *ve* is rightly rendered **therefore**, i. e. "so that," since here it introduces the result. In the loving-kindness and benefactions extended to Israel we have the *voluntas antecedens*; in the reaction of the Lord's holiness against Israel's wilful resistance his *voluntas consequens*. The latter always takes account of the reaction of man to God's grace, Mark 16, 16, and many other passages. "He who had shown himself a father to them (comp. Deut. 32, 6) became, by virtue of the reaction of his holiness, the opposite of what he wanted to be: he turned himself into an enemy toward them, *hu*, he, of all enemies the most terrible, fought against them." Delitzsch. — The accentuation of the Hebrew makes an attributive clause of the words: **he fought against them**, in this fashion: "their enemy who fought" etc. The *hu* in v. 10 corresponds to the *hu* in v. 9: the same Lord who was their Savior, was turned into their enemy. They lost his saving help, they gained his enmity. When the Lord's grace is spurned his holiness and justice step in. Back of all the human enemies who oppressed Israel was the Lord's enmity. Men were his agents and instruments only. And here again we must note that the intercessor means to state, not merely one or the other instance of Israel's punishment, but the sum and final outcome of their rebellion. Israel ceased to be the chosen nation.

11. Then he remembered the days of old,
Moses *and* his people,
saying, Where is he that brought them
up out of the sea with the shepherd
of his flock?
where *is* he that put his holy Spirit within
him?
12. That led *them* by the right hand of Moses
with his glorious arm,
dividing the water before them,
to make himself an everlasting name?
13. That led them through the deep,
as an horse in the wilderness, *that* they
should not stumble?
14. As a beast goeth down in the valley,
the Spirit of the Lord caused them to rest:
so didst thou lead thy people, to make
thyself a glorious name.

This entire section is turned awry by the translation of our version, which uses the implied subject **he** in the sense of Jehovah. But it is senseless to put these questions into the Lord's mouth. Note also the "and": "Moses *and* his people," which is inserted by the translators without a shadow of justification. No; all these questions are asked by the Israelites when the Lord, under provocation of their own wilful resistance, finally and permanently became their enemy and fought against them. Using the days of Moses in a vivid way we are, by these questions, made to see and feel what Israel had permanently lost through its own wicked unbelief. Here again it is vital to perceive that this is the final abandonment of Israel by the Lord, save for the remnant that shall repent at the feet of the Messiah Jesus. Read Is. 64, 9 in its connection, and Rom. 11, 7 and 25-26.

There is, because of this finality of the Lord's hostility, a tragic ring to these questions. They voice nothing less than a despairing cry.

The old Hebrew accentuation lets us supply the subject in the first line of v. 11. Our translators supply **he**, namely the Lord, which is manifestly an error. Stier suggests the indefinite: *man gedachte*, which is acceptable. Still better is to ignore the old accentuation, and to translate: **Then remembered the olden days of Moses his people**, making "his people," *'ammo*, the subject, and emphasizing the object, "the olden days of Moses," by placing it in front of the subject. When God had become their enemy they regretfully (though not with repentance!) realized what they had lost when once, as in the old days of Moses especially, he was their wondrous friend. — From this remembrance flow the following questions, hence the translation supplies *saying*. The first question: **Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock?** plainly refers to the crossing of the Red Sea under Moses. Yet *eth*, here rendered **with**, or "in company with," is preferably read as emphasizing "the shepherd of his flock," so that this designation refers to the Lord: "Where is he that brought them up out of the sea — he, the Shepherd of his flock?" This pictures the Lord as leading his people like a flock through the waters of the sea. Back of the question, there lies, of course, the cry: Where is this Lord now, so to lead us out of our distress again? Alas, he has disowned this wicked flock! — **Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?** touches the inwardness of what happened when the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt; compare the further statement regarding the Spirit in v. 14. What was wrought outwardly in deeds of might and majesty had its counterpart within the hearts of those through whom it was done. **Within him**, in this translation, refers to Moses alone.

And indeed the Spirit of the Lord moved Moses in all that work of deliverance. But when "the Shepherd of his flock" is read of the Lord himself, *b^eqirbo* naturally refers to the nation: in their midst." This accords with Num. 11, 17 and 25 etc.; 14, 24; 27, 18; Deut. 34, 9, passages which report that from Moses on down all the true leaders of Israel were animated by the Spirit, likewise Joshua. Where is this Lord now? the question cries, and where is his Spirit to animate our leaders now? Alas, the Lord had withdrawn the Spirit whom this obdurate people had grieved so wilfully.

The next three verses set forth the grand details of the passage through the Red Sea. Thus v. 12 mentions the dividing of the waters; v. 13 the safe passage through the deep; and v. 14 the safety and rest on the other side, when the Egyptians were destroyed. Some commentators read v. 14 as referring to the rest in Canaan, but the close connection of verses 12-14 shuts this interpretation out. It would be in line only if v. 12 mentioned the crossing of the Sea, v. 13 the passage through the desert, and then v. 14 the rest in Canaan. — Twice, first at the beginning of the passage through the Sea, and secondly at its completion, the glory of the Lord's name is mentioned as the supreme purpose in this act of deliverance, first **to make himself an everlasting name**, and secondly **to make thyself a glorious name**, with the idea that the Lord's Name i. e. the revelation he here made of himself) would always be remembered because it showed itself so gloriously on this occasion. — The act of **dividing the water before them** is ascribed to **his glorious arm**, literally "the arm of his beauty," or "of his gloriousness." The human term **arm** designates the Lord's omnipotence. When it is brought into miraculous action as here, it makes the "gloriousness" of the Lord visible to men, and is thus rightly called "the arm of his

glory." — Our version translates: **That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm,** but the verb signifies: "made to pass," and we must picture the Lord's arm or power passing forward at the right hand of Moses. In a human way we may say that the Lord walked at the side of Moses, when the waters were divided before him. — The manner of the passage through the deep is made vivid by means of the figure: **as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble.** *Sus* with the generic article may be rendered by the plural. The passage through the Red Sea was like walking over a desert plain, over which horses may run at pleasure meeting no obstruction whatever. The verb here is again the hiphil participle, *molikam*, "made to pass," the same as in v. 12. The suffix which is added bids us read this participle as a noun: "He was *their* leader through the deep"; and not as a verb: "He led *them*" etc. — A second figure is added for the safe rest after the passage. The generic article again points to the plural, hence not: **As a beast etc.**, but: **As beasts that stream down into the valley,** to graze there in peace, **the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest.** The hiphil participle *th^enichennu*, "caused him to rest," is from *nuach*, and its masculine suffix cannot refer to the feminine *b^ehemah*, "beast," but must be construed *ad sensum*: "him," 'am, = Israel. One might be inclined to correlate the *ka* in the first line with the *ken* of the second: "so . . . as." But the first line is complete in itself: "As beasts that stream down etc., (so) the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest." The Spirit is here mentioned for the same reason as in v. 10. It is the Spirit who gives us peace and thus causes us to rest, with the enemy gone who would harrass us. There was trembling and fear while the Egyptians threatened to swoop down on the Israelites; but when the Sea had swallowed these foes Israel rested in peace and security. — The final line,

beginning with *ken*, sums up all that the Lord had done in thus carrying his people to safety: **so didst thou lead the people.** It is as if the intercessor sat down and quietly contemplated it all, letting his mind and heart dwell on the wonders of it. And here again, as in v. 12, he adds: **to make thyself a glorious name.** In the whole wonderful event the intercessor sees the Lord's glory shining forth. It is the glory of his grace and saving power fully manifested.

In v. 11-14 the intercessor pictures Israel at the end of its national career, cast off by the Lord, and looking back, vainly now, at the wonderful deliverance it once had experienced at the Red Sea under its greatest leader Moses, with mighty longing in its heart that the Lord, in spite of everything, would yet again repeat in some way what he had so wonderfully and graciously done in the olden days. But now the longing is in vain — it is too late! Israel's cup of guilt is full and overflows. Grace indeed is glorious and lasts long, but when answered as Israel had answered it too long, even grace finally gives way and lets justice take its course. That was the situation which Israel finally reached when it spurned even the Son himself, Jesus the Messiah. Read carefully Prov. 1, 24-32. In the day of judgment thus come only the repentant remnant shall escape the wreckage; note Prov. 1, 33. — With all this before him the intercessor's heart is breaking for his people, now doomed, with the Lord turned against them as their enemy. The prophet now lets this breaking heart make its final heart-rending plea:

- 15. Look down from heaven, and behold,
from the habitation of thy holiness and of
thy glory:
where is thy zeal and thy strength,**

the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?

16. Doubtless thou *art* our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, *art* our father, our redeemer: thy name *is* from everlasting.

The appeal for the Lord to **look down** . . . **and behold** couples the first of these acts with the second as its effect. The Lord is asked to look down so that he may behold and take note. The thought is that when the Lord does behold he will not be able to refrain from delivering his suffering people. — **From heaven**, however, is not merely a reference to his supreme exaltation, but implies that in reality he has withdrawn from his people Israel here on earth, and as it were shut himself up in heaven. So the appeal is for him no longer thus to abandon his people. — In the second line the term “heaven” is defined: **from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory**. “Holiness,” *qodesh*, denotes the supreme moral perfection of the Lord. Yet the word embraces more than the Lord’s reaction against sin in punishment; it includes also his work of removing sin and freeing man from its curse and condemnation. Thus “heaven” as **the habitation of his holiness** is the dwelling place of the Lord’s power, which, coming down to earth, frees man from sin and makes him holy again. The appeal of the intercessor is a call for this holiness of the Lord to show itself once more in behalf of Israel. — The addition **of thy glory**, *thiph^earah*, points to the radiance, honor, and majesty of the Lord, which shines forth for angels and men when the Lord’s holiness exerts itself. — In the question: **Where is thy zeal?** *qineah* is jealousy,

broadened to signify "zeal." The implication is that the Lord, withdrawn in heaven, is not exerting himself in behalf of his people. **And thy strength, g^eburah** (here with the defective plural suffix), really: "power-deeds," brings in the effect of the divine zeal when exerted. These deeds of strength would free Israel from its oppressors, and exalt the nation under the divine favor. Yet these deeds are also now painfully absent. — Our translation reads the next line as a continuation of this question full of longing: (Where is) **the sounding of thy bowels, etc.?** Yet this line is really the answer which the intercessor makes to his own previous question: "The sounding etc. are restrained." That is the tragic result of Israel's continued obduracy. The LXX translate: "Refrain not the multitude of thy pity and of thy mercy from us." But thus to make this line a continuation of the appeal necessitates several changes in the Hebrew text. — By the term **bowels, me'im**, the Latin *viscera*, are here meant the nobler organs, namely, the heart, liver, and kidneys. These, as Delitzsch puts it, are "the physical sounding-board" of the feelings. The intercessor here states that the Lord is no longer affected by Israel's terrible state. To speak thus of God is highly anthropopathic, yet in its way wholly true. — The addition of **thy mercies, rachamim** defines the Lord's feelings as here meant, namely stirrings within his bosom to do the various things that will bring Israel relief. **Toward us** belongs to both the previous terms. — The verb *'aphaq* means "to hold back," "to hold in." The Lord does not let his merciful feelings have sway so as to produce merciful deeds in Israel's behalf. All this means only one thing: what the intercessor is stating in regard to the Lord is that he has determined on Israel's doom.

In the next Hebrew stanza the two *ki* may be rendered: "for . . . and"; or: "since . . .

since." The translation of the first *ki* with **doubtless** is merely interpretative. The petition for deliverance is now justified on the part of the intercessor: **Doubtless thou art our father.** In the Old Testament the term Father is sparingly used of the Lord, and sometimes signifies only "Creator," though generally, and here too, it expresses the Lord's relation of love for his chosen people Israel. It still lacks much of the full depth of the New Testament revelation brought by Christ. Here the Lord is called Israel's **father** to emphasize the love and help that may be expected of him for Israel. — Neither **Abraham** nor **Israel**, fathers indeed, yet only earthly, and now long removed from their descendants, are able to do anything for them in their calamities: though Abraham **be ignorant of us**, know us not, and Israel **acknowledge us not.** The second verb here is the hiphil of *nakar*; hence "heed, or consider, us not," in the sense that the Israelites are strangers to him. This is one of the clear Scripture proofs against praying to the saints. Israel's intercessor admits that it is utterly in vain to call upon Abraham and Jacob, these great Old Testament saints, in Israel's behalf. — In the final couplet the idea contained in the term "Father" is elaborated. First the Lord's own covenant name is inserted: **Thou, O LORD, art our father.** Then follows the illuminating apposition: **our redeemer, go'el** (compare v. 9 *ga'al* and its meaning), one who reclaims from unjust seizure. Only, the modifier: **from everlasting** (really: "from of old") belongs to "redeemer." Thus the line reads: "our redeemer from of old, that is thy name." The idea in the word **name** when applied to the Lord is always that of the revelation by which he has made himself known, and by which he may be known. All along in the days gone by the Lord revealed himself as Israel's redeemer, who again and again reclaimed them from tyrannical usurpers.

But, alas, all this is changed now. The nation as such is abandoned by its former Go'el; in his holiness and judgment he has left them to their fate. Let all those mark it well who now persist in abusing their day of grace.

SUGGESTIONS

We can hardly say that this text presents an obvious subject to the preacher. That is due to the character of the text and its run of thought, which indeed follows one direct line, yet does not center around one obvious point, but embraces a complex of facts and thoughts. To arrive at a subject we must therefore summarize the main things contained in the text, and this is done best by first analyzing its contents, and then binding together what we find. The analysis is simple and easy. There is 1) the section concerning the lovingkindness of the Lord toward Israel. There is 2) the briefer statement concerning Israel's rebellion and the Lord's final enmity. This is followed 3) by Israel's poignant and regretful longing. And the picture is completed 4) by the lone voice of heart-breaking intercessory appeal. Surveying this analysis, and keeping hold of the context, namely the Lord's answer which rejects this obdurate nation completely, we may say that the subject of this text is: *The Tragedy of Israel's Career under the Lovingkindness of the Lord*. Putting the subject into some such form, it will hardly be difficult to embody it in an analytical outline for the sermon on this last Sunday in the year. We may mold our material in this shape:

The Warning of Israel's Answer to the Lord's Loving-kindnesses.

- 1) *The lovingkindnesses that called for faith and obedience.*
- 2) *The obduracy that gained the Lord's enmity.*
- 3) *The longing that comes too late.*
- 4) *The tragic intercession that found no response.*

In an outline like this each part is easily fitted with its corresponding application to the men of our day who will not let the lovingkindness of the Lord lead them to repentance.

Keeping hold of the central idea in the text we may formulate a theme in this fashion:

How Israel Finally Forfeited the Lord's Lovingkindness.

- 1) *It failed to respond to the Lord's lovingkindness.*
- 2) *It continued to vex the Lord's Holy Spirit.*
- 3) *It finally aroused the Lord's enduring enmity.*
- 4) *Then it was left with its vain longing.*
- 5) *And even the strongest intercession proved in vain.*

Israel is an example of all those who receive the grace of God in vain. The heart of the text may thus be reached by making the application prominent at once: Another year now ending shines with the lovingkindness of the Lord. It is the last of a long series of such years. Some think that these years so full of Gospel grace and blessing will go on indefinitely, and that the Lord's lovingkindnesses will always be there, no matter how we treat them or how long we may let them wait. Put away the thought ere it lead you into the most tragic mistake. The ancient Jews once made that terrible mistake. They abused their prophets and crucified the Son of God himself. Look at this outcast nation now: once under the most wonderful grace and mercy of God, now an example of God's fearful, fateful judgment. Let the close of this year full of the Lord's lovingkindness call to you in warning:

Embrace the Lord's Lovingkindness Ere it is Too Late!

- 1) *Recognize its grace and mercy.*
- 2) *Answer it not by vexing God's Spirit.*
- 3) *Think of the vain regrets that would follow.*
- 4) *Hear the tragic appeal that came too late.*

The application to our own time and people may dominate the outline in a manner something like this:—At the close of the year so full of the Lord's lovingkindnesses in bodily and especially in spiritual gifts, and in the face of the indifference, impenitence, and unbelief of so many, we, remembering Israel, may well ask ourselves the serious question:

Will the Lord's Lovingkindness Last for Ever?

The answer will be twofold:

- I. *No, it will not, when men obdurately abuse that lovingkindness.*
 - 1) *Picture its greatness.*
 - 2) *Think of the enormity of vexing the Holy Spirit.*
 - 3) *Then mark well the vain crying when grace yields to final judgment.*

II. *Yes, it certainly will, when men in faith embrace that lovingkindness.*

- 1) That is what its greatness means to awaken in us.
- 2) Think of the blessedness of gratefully responding to the Holy Spirit.
- 3) Mark well the remnant in Israel that escaped the judgment, and do you abide among the little flock.

In a treatment like this the context of the following chapter is used, and in a legitimate way, since the text itself with its intercession for Israel involves the reply which the Lord is bound to make.—Behind the negatives of any text there lie, by implication the positives. So is our text. When these covered positives are uncovered in a telling way they prove very effective. Here is an effort along this line.

Israel's Warning to Us at the Close of the Year: Do Not Wait Until it is Too Late!

Now is the time.

- I. *To embrace the Lord's lovingkindness—do not wait!*
- II. *To yield to the Lord's Holy Spirit—do not wait.*
- III. *To secure the Lord's help for all time to come—do not wait.*

In "Sermon Sketches on O. T. Eisenach Texts," p. 16, etc., the theme: "The Blessedness of Solemn Hours," is, in the first place far too vague and general, and then, worst of all, conflicts with the entire setting of the text, which is full of the tragedy of final rejection and *lost* blessedness. This is true likewise of the division that is offered: 1) "Memories come to our minds"; 2) "Prayers rise to our lips." When the burden of a text is fatally misconceived the error is not even covered up by means of the old worn out homiletical makeshift of generalizing the misconceived elements in the text.

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Psalm 90

Did Moses write this Psalm? The answer to the question will materially affect the entire sermon. That Moses did write it is evidenced by the most ancient tradition, embodied already in the title of the Psalm: "A Prayer of Moses the man of God." There is no other conflicting tradition. Then there is the strongest kind of internal evidence, consisting of distinctive words and expressions which occur only in this Psalm and in Deuteronomy, or chiefly in Deuteronomy. Compare Delitzsch *Die Psalmen, vierte uebergearbeitete Auflage*, for the details. Everything in the language points to Moses, and to Moses only, as the author. The thought does the same, in the most perfect manner according with all that we know about this Old Testament mediator and intercessor of Israel. Even the situation which called forth this Prayer is reflected in the Psalm. It was the great dying in the desert that pressed this prayer of intercession from the soul of Moses. — Against this affirmative evidence there really stands nothing. The radical critics who deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch offer us nothing but the baseless conjecture that some later writer impersonated Moses. What that guess does to the inspiration of this Psalm, and of Holy Writ in general, we need not elaborate here. Some doubters, like foolish Clarke, dream of a later Moses, not the lawgiver, which is nothing but hazarding a guess. Note well that no guess can possibly count as evidence. The 70 and 80 years mentioned in the Psalm as the common terminus of human life, we are told, conflict with Moses' authorship,

since he himself lived to be 120, his sister 130, his brother 123, his successor 110, and Caleb 85. This overlooks the fact that at this very time the reduction to 70 and 80 years set in for men generally. Also that God made the real career of Moses begin when common men were ready to die, namely at the age of 80, and that even when Moses died at the age of 120 "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated," Deut. 34, 7. The preservation of other exceptional servants of Jehovah at this time is due to the will and purpose of God, just as this is beyond question in the case of Moses. — With no real evidence to the contrary the preacher is bound to proclaim this Psalm as the Prayer of Moses.

Spurgeon rashly finds fault with the use of this Psalm on funeral occasions, and no doubt would find similar fault with its use as a text for a Christian congregation on the last Sunday of the year. In *The Treasury of David*, IV, p. 201, he writes: "To apply an ode, written by the leader of the legal dispensation under circumstances of peculiar judgment, in reference to a people under penal censure, to those who fall asleep in Jesus, seems to be the height of blundering. We may learn much from it, but we ought not to misapply it by taking to ourselves, as the beloved of the Lord, that which was chiefly true of those to whom God had sworn in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest." Thus Spurgeon puts himself in conflict with the sound sense of the Christians in many ages. Moses is the greatest Gospel prophet of the old dispensation, unto whom Christ himself is like, and not by any means "the leader of the legal dispensation" minus the full Old Testament Gospel of promise and forgiveness. Compare v. 1 and v. 14 of our Psalm. Spurgeon means by "the beloved of the Lord" certain people elected from all eternity by an absolute and mysterious decree. Such people could

learn nothing from this Psalm, even though Spurgeon in a fashion would grant it. He consigns the Israelites in the desert, because they all had to die there, as reprobates into hell. Moses prays for them, and thus flatly contradicts Spurgeon's Calvinism: "O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." Even Christians dying today, though they fall asleep in Jesus, die because they are still sinners, and die because of their sins. It is the height of wisdom, therefore, when true Christians, especially in the presence of death and mourning, make Moses' great confession of sin, and his acknowledgment of the just wrath of God because of sin their own, and then appropriate Moses' appeal to the mercy of God. Thus, too, with another year faded and gone, reminding us of our own fading life, and a new year with its uncertainties opening before us, the words of Moses in this Psalm most adequately voice the thoughts that should fill our hearts. Very fittingly our Psalm sets before us, in this first service of the secular new year, *the eternal God whose mercy is the sole refuge of sinful, dying mortals.*

Like the Pentateuch the Psalms were divided into five books, and Ps. 90 heads the fourth book, which really begins the second half of the Psalms. This is the oldest Psalm in the entire collection. It contains first a recitative section, v. 1-12, and then a prayer, v. 13-17. The heading which characterizes the Psalm as a **Prayer** because of its second part, is of course an addition, and not an integral part of the composition. It honors **Moses** with the old prophet title **the man of God**, which he certainly deserved in an eminent degree, and which marks him as in close communion with God.

1. LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.
2. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.
3. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.
4. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

The first chord in the grand symphony of this Psalm voices the mighty fact that in all past ages God has shown himself as what he was from all eternity and ever will be. Infinitely supreme over all that passes on earth he stands changeless forever. 'Adonay, Lord supreme, Lord of all, is thus the proper title for addressing God.—Of this mighty Lord Moses declares: **thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.** He is speaking of himself and all God's people in the past ages. In *ma'on*, **dwelling place**, there is the idea of a fixed, enduring abode, where one is sheltered and safe. The Lord has ever received and sheltered those who fled to him from the sin and evil that threatened them. Delitzsch points out that the verb **hast been**, *hayitha*, is not mere past existence, but manifestation combined with existence, *extitisti* in the sense of *exhibuisti*. God manifested himself, and thus was, our safe shelter.—**In all generations** is really: "in generation and generation," in one after the other, and thus in all, no matter what changes, vicissitudes, or dangers they might hold.

Verse 2 elaborates the essential point in verse 1 by describing in concrete fashion the eternity of 'El,

the Almighty. The generations of men come and go, but the mountains endure. Yet the earth brought forth the mountains. And even before the earth gave them birth, the Almighty existed from eternity.— On earth there is nothing as permanent as **the mountains**. What is the tiny figure of man and his brief span of life compared with their unchanging grandeur? Yet even the mountains **were brought forth**, were born, *yulladu*, pual of *yalad*, by their mother, the earth.— This birth takes us back to the days of creation. By *'erets* is meant our globe, and by *thebel* the earth surface with its elevations and valleys. But the verb *techolel* cannot be translated: **thou hadst formed**, since it is not the 2nd per. masc., with God as the subject. Nor is it the polal (passive), implying God as the agent. It is the polel *cholel*, to give birth with birth-pains (Koenig). The subject is **the earth and the world**. This means that here we have one, not two thoughts: the mountains were born; the earth and the world gave them birth at the time of creation. There is nothing here of the unbiblical idea of an emanation, by a kind of birth, of the earth and world from God, although Delitzsch thinks so. Nor is there any idea of an evolution through long millenniums. Moses, who wrote the first chapter of Genesis, tells us that on the third day the dry land was formed, and it was then that the earth gave birth to mountain heights. In later convulsions other mountains were formed.— Before all this took place, **even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God**. The term *'olam*, from the verb which means “to conceal,” signifies *unabsehbarer Zeitraum*, an age that reaches back (or forward) so far that its terminus is wholly concealed from us, and thus when referring to God: “from (to) everlasting.” *'El, God*, the One who is absolute power, is to be read as the predicate, not the vocative (“thou, God, art”).

Verse 3 places over against the eternity of God, as brought out by the reference to the mountains, the transitoriness of man. — **Thou turnest man to destruction**, as we shall see in a moment, because of his sinfulness. The jussive imperf. *thasheb* is poetic, in place of *thashib*, from *shub*. The word *'enosh* is **man** in his weakness, a fitting term here. And **destruction** is *dakk'a*, best read as a neuter noun: that which is crushed and ground to pieces, i. e. dust. Evidently this repeats the thought of Gen. 3, 19: "unto dust shalt thou return." — The next line: **and sayest, Return, ye children of men**, raises a question. Clarke, for one, thinks it might mean man's resurrection. We dismiss that as an exegetical guess. A. Pfeiffer makes this clause repeat the thought of the previous one: "Return (to dust), ye children of men," stressing the point that the same verb *shub* in both clauses must mean the same thing. Delitzsch, with most commentators reads: "Return, ye children of men (in a new generation)." He urges the imperfect tense as consecutive to the verb in the previous clause; also the expression **children of men**, *bene-'adam*, as befitting a new generation in contrast to *'enosh*, as befitting a dying generation. He might also have pointed to the context, v. 1: "generation and generation," thus a succession; and v. 3 elucidates what precedes. To read both clauses as synonymous, results in an anticlimax, where only a climax would be proper. "To return again to dust" is far stronger than the bare verb "to return again." While it is true, the same verb in close connection has the same sense, this could be decisive here only if the two verbs had corresponding synonymous modifiers, which, however, is not the case. Only a mechanical exegesis can feel itself compelled to ignore such vital features. One generation is sent into dust, another is called to fill its place. This succession shows, in glaring contrast

already to the permanency of the mountains, and far more in contrast with the everlastingness of God, how transient man's life on earth really is.

Verse 4 begins with **for**, *ki*, and commentators ask why. A causal connection with v. 3 is not obvious, and so usually one is construed with v. 2. But it is both simpler and truer to the thought to read "for," like the Greek *γάρ*, as elucidating and thus proving the main thought of the previous verses, God's eternity as over against our earthly transitory life. — **A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.** In a human way this states how time looks to God. The Jewish day ended at evening; when past, when turned to "yesterday" — it is gone! So a 1000 human years, an entire millennium of 365,000 days, looks, humanly speaking, to God. Note the imperfect tense in **when it is past**; "for it passes" would demand the perfect tense. — The second comparison is stronger: **and as a watch in the night.** The Jews counted three watches. The little touch "in the night," *ballaylah*, and not merely, "of the night," *hallaylah*, places us right into the night, when as so often the passing of the four hours of a watch was signalled. The sleepers then aroused had passed through those four hours hardly conscious of them. So, humanly speaking, the vastest stretches of time affect God. While he indeed enters into the course of time which he himself has created for us, he himself is not in any way subject to its limitations as we are. Even our minds are chained to time, so that we cannot really conceive eternity, but must needs use some sort of time words to picture it. Yet eternity, in which God dwells, is not time at all or in any sense, but the opposite of time; it is timelessness, not a succession or *fluxum*, but an all-together, *simul totā*, and thus a *fixum*. Once in a thousand years a little bird flies to an adamant mountain and whets its bill once upon it; when that mountain is all whetted

down one second of eternity is not yet passed. It's like a baby's hand reaching out to touch the sun. So glorious is the infinite God in his eternity.

5. **Thou carriest them away as with a flood;
they are as a sleep:
in the morning they are like grass which
groweth up.**
6. **In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth
up;
in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.**
7. **For we are consumed by thine anger,
and by thy wrath we are troubled.**
8. **Thou hast set our iniquities before thee,
our secret sins in the light of thy coun-
tenance.**

In these lines, which picture still further the transient character of human life, the underlying cause is added: our sin, and God's consequent wrath. — As in v. 3, our death is again attributed to God: **Thou carriest them away as with a flood**, which in the Hebrew is just a verb with its suffix, *zaram*, "to flood away," yet not with the flood of a stream, or ocean waves, but with the flood of a down-pour as in a thunderstorm. The suffix "them" refers to "the children of men." And the point to note is that an overwhelming power from above causes this deadly destruction. "A man is a bubble," said the Greek proverb. Lucian adds that some disappear at once, born only to die; some float up and down a few turns and disappear; and those that last longest are tossed about and crushed at last by a great drop from a cloud. — **They are sleep**, omit "as," and "a" as well. This in no new figure, it merely appends the result of being swept off by a cloudburst — those carried off are left in the sleep of death. This is the

proper interpretation because in the Hebrew it is all just one poetic line: "Thou carriest . . . sleep." Yet some make our earthly life a sleep, either because it leaves so little trace behind it, or because our life seems as unreal as a dream. The comparison outright to a dream would then have been better: "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." — Shakespeare. — While the chief point throughout is the dying and death of man, the condition which involves this is also set forth. *They are like grass which groweth up*, literally: "In the morning like grass sending up new shoots." As in v. 3, so here, the passing of one generation is paired with the coming on of another. But each one is after all only *like grass*, transient in its very nature. The verb *chalaph* signifies *regerminare*, to sprout out again, and the form used is the imperfect kal.

In v. 6 Moses extends the description: **In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up**, which repeats the previous line, adding significantly *yatsits*, hiphil from *tsuts*, "to unfold radiance," "to send out bloom." There are verdant new shoots, and these break into flower. But their very nature is transient. The history of grass is: "sown, grown, blown, mown, gone." — Already **in the evening it is cut down, and withereth**. The subject of the verb *yemolel* is indefinite: "one cuts it down," for which our idiom often uses the passive: "it is cut down." If *molel* as the pilel from *mul* or the poel from *malal* is read as intransitive: "it withereth," the withering would be mentioned twice. It is transitive, "to clip off the tops," "to mow," and the result of this is *yabesh*, "it dries, or withers." This quick transition from bloom to hay is a true picture of man, now proudly alive, presently abjectly dead.

In v. 7 there is a double emphasis: in the first clause on **we are consumed**, which is put forward; and in the second clause on **by thy wrath**, which also

is forward. The conjunction **for**, *ki*, goes with both clauses, and thus both explains and also proves what was said before. We are led to understand better what is meant by the figure of the grass, and we are given the reason for what the figure presents. — Moses now changes to the first person. He speaks from Israel's own experience, but from that experience coupled with the knowledge of the real cause of that experience. It was not an inscrutable fate that caused this dying, nor an iron law of nature, so that dumb submission would be man's only answer. It was the righteousness and holiness of Almighty God, unalterably set against sin. The true answer to that from man is contrition, confession, and abandonment of everything else save the appeal to God's grace in reliance on his pardon, v. 13-14. — **We are consumed** is really: "we fade out, or vanish away," as a vapor disappears, James 4, 14. **By thine anger**, *'aph*, states the ultimate cause. — The next line repeats the thought, thus hammering it in. In the chiasm formed by the two lines the words **anger** and **wrath** are purposely brought together. **By thy wrath**, *chemah*, is really: "by they wrath-heat," God's burning indignation. It is in the Pentateuch that *'aph* and *chemah* are used repeatedly side by side. These terms signify nothing like human passion in God, but always the unvarying reaction of his purity against all impurity, of his holiness against all sin. He would not be God if sin could stand in his presence indefinitely. The blindness of unbelief which loves sin cannot and will not understand the holiness which hates and abhors sin. Cancel the wrath of God, and you deny the God that really exists, and put a self-made mummy in his place in your heart. — The verb **are we troubled**, *bahal*, signifies "to quake," and thus "to be frightened." On the historical situation from which this Psalm sprang, Menken writes: "No one has ever seen everything dying around him and

carried away to the grave, like Moses. Dying and seeing others die, burying and being buried was the common and every day thing out in the Arabian Desert, in a measure which otherwise from day to day and year to year is never the case. In the space of 38 years 603,550 men died, with the exception of 2, not counting women and children and the many deaths in the numerous tribe of Levi. Thus in almost all families and homes the daily life took on the dreary form and the muffled tone of a constant business with death. Overcome by this excessive mortality, Moses lifts himself and his people out of the dust and dread of death with faith in God and the life that is of God, prays, and teaches to pray: Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations!"

Verse 8 places beside the ultimate cause for this dying the mediate cause which is sin and God's judgment on sin. This is done in two synonymous lines. **Thou hast set our iniquities before thee**, pictures the judge who closely examines our sins, one by one and all together, in order to pronounce his verdict on them. Sin as *'avon* is deviation from the right way, and thus *Verschuldung* or guiltiness.—The second line intensifies both points: **our secret sins in the light of thy countenance**. None can escape, even the hidden ones receive judgment: *'alam*, pass. part., that which is hidden, *'alumim*, the plural. All "are set in the light of thy countenance," penetrated through and through. The word for light is *'or*, and *ma'or* is light bearer, here the radiant circle of light; *phaneh* is face or countenance, and when ascribed to God, his being as turned toward the world, the divine $\delta\delta\epsilon\alpha$, penetrating with the light of grace all that is in harmony with God, and exposing to the very bottom all that is contrary to God, and consuming it in wrath (Delitzsch).—When Moses states here what the divine Judge has done as regards Israel he humbly and contritely confesses his and his people's sins, and acknowledges the

righteousness of the divine verdict on them. Would to God that men everywhere would do the same when God reveals his judgment on sin!

9. **For all our days are passed away in thy wrath:**
we spend our years as a tale that is told.
10. **The days of our years are threescore years and ten;**
and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years,
yet is their strength labor and sorrow;
for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.
11. **Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.**
12. **So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.**

In these lines the condition resulting from God's judgment is described, with the added plaint that so few recognize God's wrath, and with the prayer for true wisdom. — **For, ki,** introduces this further explanation based on God's wrath because of sin: **all our days are passed away in thy wrath,** i. e. they turn themselves (*phanah*), and thus disappear. The term for **wrath** is here *'ebrah*, which from its basic meaning "overflow" signifies anger that breaks forth. Our lives when started, instead of going forward to life more and more abundant, turn themselves backward and head for death. The actual fact is that every day we *live* we take one step nearer to the day when we *die*. And as regards rebellious Israel, Spurgeon is right, God shortened her days, each halting place leaving a graveyard, and their line of march marked by a lengthening line of tombs. This is how our lives look under the wrath of God. — This turning back and disappearing is emphasized by a

still stronger comparison: **we spend our years as a tale that is told**; more exactly: "we have spent our years like a murmur, a sigh, or groan, *hegeh*, the verb *hagah* being used for all inarticulate sounds of man or beast. This is a much stronger figure than our English version suggests in the translation "a tale that is told."

Verse 10 now records the brevity of our human life by stating the actual facts without any figure. The ordinary maximum is 70 to 80 years. It is probably best to construe **the days of our years** as an absolute nominative, with *bahem*, lit. "in them," indicating the amount or sum which they contain; this is 70 years, or in the more sonorous translation **three score years and ten**. — There is no reason to object to the rendering: **and if by reason of strength**: since *g^eburah* signifies "fulness of strength," though Jerome translates: *si autem multum*. This less usual limit is set at 80, **four score years**. By **strength** *rohebam* (*rohab*), from the verb *rahab*, "to storm at some one," is meant prideful and boasting action, here anything that puffs men up, viz. wealth, honor, luxury, beauty, etc. Everything of this sort, even during the longest life, amounts in reality only to **labor and sorrow**, in the sense of weariness and misfortune. There is an implication here which should not be overlooked. If the proudest part of our life is no more than this, then what is its poorer part, and its poorest? — From the end of life as thus described how does it appear when we look back? **It is soon cut off**, *gaz*, from *guz*, *transire*, and as Delitzsch adds, not as one brushes past, but as a thing is cut through. The subject lies in the context. The term for "soon" is the adverbial infinitive *chish* (*chush*). — **And we fly away**, like an army pursued. Here Moses finally reaches a figure, yet it is only one inherent in the facts as just stated. — At the council assembled with Edwin of Northumbria

at Godmanham, to debate on the mission of Paulinus, the King was thus addressed by a heathen Thane, one of his chief men: "The present life of man, O King, may be likened to what often happens when thou art sitting at supper with thy thanes and nobles in winter-time. A fire blazes on the hearth, and warms the chamber; outside rages a storm of wind and snow; a sparrow flies in at one door of thy hall, and quickly passes out at the other. For a moment and while it is within, it is unharmed by the wintry blast, but this brief season of happiness over, it returns to that wintry blast whence it came, and vanishes from thy sight. Such is the brief life of man; we know not what went before it, and we are utterly ignorant of what shall follow it. If, therefore, this new doctrine contain anything more certain, it justly deserves to be followed." — *Bede's Chronicle*, quoted by Spurgeon, *Treasury*.

In v. 11 lies the implication that men should certainly be moved by the results of God's anger to fear him. The question form furthermore implies that but few have this fear. **Who knoweth the power of thine anger?** *yada'*, who really inwardly realizes its power? The knowledge meant is not merely intellectual, but an inward comprehension and realization that fills the soul and effects corresponding results. The "power" of God's anger was right before Israel's eyes in the constant deaths along through the wilderness. So to-day the judgments God sends are visible and painful enough, but many simply do not realize their significance. They look and look, talk about the terrible things that occur, get excited over them, run to relieve those directly hit, record the whole thing in the press, put it in the pages of history, but do not take it to heart. — The next line is still part of the question: **Who knoweth . . . according to thy fear thy wrath?** The suffix attached to *yir'ah* is an objective genitive, "thy fear" in the

sense of "to fear thee." In v. 7 *'aph* and *chemah* were paralleled, "anger" and "indignation"; here *'aph* and *'ebrah* "anger" and "overflow, outbreak of anger." The second term always helps to emphasize and make plainer the first. The new point is the true norm for realizing the significance of the judgments in which God's anger breaks out; this norm is the fear of God. **Fear**, *yir'ah* or *yir'ath*, is a cardinal Old Testament term which the preacher must be sure to understand in its true Old Testament sense. Its synonym is godliness. As such it is the beginning of true religious wisdom, in fact the very a-b-c of it. Only the children of God have this fear. They derive it from the Gospel. It is their *childlike awe* of God, their Father, so holy, mighty, and yet loving and kind. For all the world they would not insult or grieve him with disobedience, but they are drawn to humble themselves before him, to give themselves to him, to delight in honoring, trusting, and obeying him. This fear of God must be carefully distinguished from the *slavish terror* of God, which is bound, sooner or later, to overwhelm those who turn from God, disregard him, and thus disobey him, scorning both his lovingkindness and, for a time at least, his judgments. When this fear sets in it comes from the Law. The Gospel is meant to deliver from this kind of fear. For the godly it has one use, namely to crush the old Adam still left in their hearts. Nobody needs to pray for this fear—it comes of itself at last with overwhelming terror, when the blind and obdurate sinner is reached by the hand of judgment. Moses means to say in our Psalm that the godly fear, the childlike awe, by which alone we can know God aright and realize what his judgments mean, is far from the hearts of many men, even when his judgments begin to reach them. Remaining strangers thus to the godly fear, the terror which is the eventual portion of the ungodly must at last overwhelm them.

Verse 12 closes the recitative part of the Psalm by what may be called a transitional prayer. Moses asks that he and his people may gain the true knowledge which is wisdom: **To number our days so teach us, hoda'**, hiphil of *yada'*, i. e. to count their brief number, marking how few they are because of our sinfulness. "Number we our days by our daily prayers; number we them by our daily obedience and daily acts of love; number we them by the memories that they bring of holy men who have entered into their Savior's peace, and by the hopes which are woven with them of glory and of grace won for us." *Plain Com.* — The purpose and result of such numbering is added by the next clause: **that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.** The translation "apply" for the hiphil imperf. of *bo'* may seriously mislead, as in the case of Henry Smith, who imagined that wisdom was a sort of medicine to apply to the heart, and valueless when not applied. We must translate *hebi'* "that we may garner a heart of wisdom," as one gathers in and stores safely the fruits of the field, the Ger. *einheimsen*. Incidentally note that the idea of numbering and carefully counting tallies with the idea of garnering and carefully stowing away, for instance so many tons or bushels.

13. **Return, O LORD, how long?
and let it repent thee concerning thy ser-
vants.**
14. **O satisfy us early with thy mercy;
that we may rejoice and be glad all our
days.**
15. **Make us glad according to the days
wherein thou hast afflicted us,
and the years wherein we have seen evil.**
16. **Let thy work appear unto thy servants,
and thy glory unto their children.**

17. **And let the beauty of the LORD our God
be upon us:
and establish thou the work of our hands
upon us;
yea, the work of our hands establish thou
it.**

The deep, humble, penitent, and yet trustful meditation, which penetrates the full reality and inwardness of human life in its relation to God, and of Israel's punishment under the wrath of God, forms the basis on which the fervent petitions rest which now follow. The heart of these petitions is the appeal for the return of God's grace. That means the turning away of God's anger, and the return of joy instead of affliction. That involves also the accomplishment of God's saving work, and blessedness for Israel in taking part in it.

The cry: **Return, O LORD**, is meant as in Ex. 32, 12: "Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people." Where in v. 1 *'Adonay*, supreme Lord of all, was the proper title in addressing God, here in v. 13 *Yahveh*, he who never changes in his covenant, is the only appropriate name. The sigh: **how long?** is elliptical, as in Ps. 6, 3, in the sense: How long wilt thou yet let thine anger continue? — The verb in: **let it repent thee**, is *nacham*, "to feel pity," and the persons for whom the pity of God is sought are named: **concerning thy servants**. i. e. their pitiful condition. There is a strong implication in calling the people of Israel Jehovah's **servants**. They were in a relation to God different from all other nations, and though they had sinned and rebelled God on his part had not broken off that relation completely. They had forgotten what was due to Jehovah in the great work in which he had made them his servants and instruments, he on his part had not forgotten that he had chosen them as such servants,

Verse 14 adds the positive side of the plea, the prayer for **mercy**, *chesed*, God's favor, the German *Huld*. It is the opposite of strict justice, yet not in the sense of favoritism which disregards justice and right, but always with the idea of expiation and repentance where guilt has been incurred. This may or may not be added in so many words, it is nevertheless always involved. In our Psalm the repentance and confession of sin comes out very plainly in the first section, and forms the basis of the second. The entire Mosaic economy taught expiation by the typical sacrifices that pointed forward to the blood-atonement of Christ. — The piel of *saba'*, here with the accusatives of the persons and of the substance, means to **satisfy**, satiate, as when one is hungry and is given abundant food and drink. So Moses hungered for God's favor, and wanted to eat and drink his fill of it. Jesus said: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Matth. 5, 6. — The time modifier *babboqer* is translated **early**, yet *boqer* means "morning." Koenig renders the terms in our passage *Anbruchszeit des Heils*, and Delitzsch "the beginning of a new period of grace." "Early" should not be read in the sense of "early in our lives," in youth or childhood; nor in the sense of "quickly," at once after withdrawing the wrath. It denotes the morning dawn which ushers in a grand day of Jehovah's favor for his people. To Moses the days passed in the wilderness under the divine displeasure look like a long, dreadful night, and his cry is that the morning of grace may dawn at last, when Israel may enter its promised land and as Jehovah's servants have part in the wondrous work he has planned. — The two imperfects which now follow express intention, i. e. the determination that what now is said shall be the result: **that we may rejoice and be glad all our days**; or: "then we will rejoice" etc. The doubling

of the verbs, *ranan*, "to shout joyfully," "to jubilate," and *sameach*, "to be happy," while emphasizing the idea of joy, is highly expressive: when the dawn of grace breaks there shall burst forth a shout of joy, and this shall usher in a long era of steady happiness. — **All our days** is really "in all our days," i. e. the time allotted to us of the Lord.

Verse 15 is a pendant to v. 14, for it dwells on the idea of gladness already made so prominent, prays directly for this gladness, and sets for it a proportionate period. Again we have the verb *sameach*, as if Moses was loth to let it go: **Make us glad etc.** The plural *y^emoth*, instead of *y^eme*, occurs only here and in Deut. 37, 7; so also *sh^enoth* instead of *sh^ene*, is first found in Deut. The two terms are synonymous, yet God's afflicting, '*anah*, "to press down," "to humble," came like single acts on certain **days**, and the result was **years** in which Israel saw evil, i. e. lived to see misfortune. Thus a single act of God's punitive justice has long, painful results. When Israel was in the midst of the 38 years of punishment the time seemed endless; so now, in like measure, days and years of gladness are the prayer of Moses. He thinks of the blessed period of divine favor in the land of Canaan, where all the promises of God and all the hopes of Israel centered.

V. 16 has a pendant in v. 17, for *hadar*, **glory** or gloriousness, is quite the same as *no'am*, **beauty**, literally "loveliness," that which fittingly adorns him. These terms denote the divine attributes, which when displayed make the Lord seem glorious and attractive to us. In v. 16 **thy work** is paired with "thy glory." This is the great work of preparing salvation to all the nations of the earth. It is most emphatically the Lord's own work. Hence the term **thy servants** for Moses and Israel in the execution of this work. They could do only the part allotted to them, and could do it only at the Lord's bidding. *Yera'eh* and *y^ehi* are

optatives. **Let appear** is in the sense: let it go forward, so that we can see it in its progress. For Moses and Israel this would be not only supreme satisfaction, but the highest evidence of the Lord's favor. So great is the work of the Lord that the glory shining forth in it will reach into future generations: **their children**. — And now he is named '*Adonay*-'*Eloheanu*, **the Lord our God**. The possessive suffix "our" should not be overlooked, since this makes him who is the supreme Lord, and the great God of might, the possession of his people, their unspeakably great gift of grace, see Is. 40, 1, Third Sunday in Advent. — **Be . . . upon us** conceives the Lord's beauty as descending and resting like sunshine upon his people. — Jerome said of the great work of salvation, it is wholly *opus tuum*, "thy work"; yet for the performing of it God's grace chose Israel as his servants. Jesus said: "Salvation is of the Jews." John 4, 22. Thus v. 17 rounds out v. 16: **and establish thou the work of our hands upon us**. The verb *kun* means to fix or make firm, and when used of an activity or work it means to give it success that will abide. The addition **upon us** views the divine act as descending and laying a blessing upon Israel's work in the Lord's plan. — The last line is repeated with a slight variation: **yea, the work of our hands establish thou it**. We may say this repetition shows how Moses lingers on the thought and the great prospect which it opens for the future. Perhaps, too, it is a liturgical refrain intended as a response for the congregation when the Psalm was used in worship.

The prayer is complete. It deals with the supreme essentials: God's grace and the completion of his saving work. The grace, with the wrath removed and the joy returned to Israel; the work, making God's glory and beauty appear, and giving Israel's work heavenly success.

SUGGESTIONS

This text practically skeletonizes itself. One needs only to follow the line of thought laid down by Moses. There will be little to do beyond deciding about the formulation of theme and parts. Here is an attempt along this line:

The Lord Our Dwelling Place in All Generations.

- I. *Think how men wither and die.*
- II. *Look at your own sin and guilt.*
- III. *Understand God's wrath and anger.*
- IV. *Observe man's blindness and folly (v. 11).*
- V. *Then throw yourself on God's mercy and grace.*
- VI. *Behold his saving work and glory.*
- VII. *And let him establish the work of your hands.*

In a sermon like this the fifth and sixth part should be filled with Christ and our trust in his pardon. While there are seven parts, this need not produce undue length, because there will be no need for many sub-parts. — Another obvious analytical division offers itself in the two main parts of the Psalm which are easily made the main parts of the sermon. The first twelve verses state the all-important *facts* which we ought to face at the beginning of the new year; and the last five verses embody the only wise and true *conclusion* which we ought to draw. The tie to bind these two together lies in the word "wisdom," which in the Psalm itself hinges the two sections together. So we will have an outline like this:

Moses Teaches Us the True Wisdom at the Beginning of a New Year.

We are wise if to-day we

- I. *Face the actual facts.*
- II. *Draw the true conclusion.*

These facts are: 1) Man's withering and dying; 2) Our own sin and guilt; 3) God's wrath and anger; 4) The blindness and folly of so many. And the one conclusion for us to draw this day is: 1) That we appeal to God to withdraw his wrath and satisfy us with his mercy, giving us joy all our days; 2) That he open our eyes to see his saving work, and let his glory and beauty shine upon us; 3) That he bless our lives and the work of our hands and make them truly fruitful. — As between these two outlines there is little difference, except in the form. The substance as presented in the run of the thought is practically

the same. — Here we append a good outline from Karl Gerok, whose three volumes of sermons on the Psalms are excellent in many ways:

The Eternity of God and the Perishableness of Men.

- I. *The Gloria* — a prayer of praise on God's eternity.
- II. *The Litany* — a prayer of lamentation on man's perishableness.
- III. *The Kyrie Eleison* — a prayer of appeal for God's grace and help.

When we come to apply synthesis there is more leeway in outlining, although the substance of the thought will remain the same. A vital link in the chain here presented is the mercy of the Lord. So we may pick up the entire chain by catching this link:

Let Us Begin the New Year with the Mercy of the Lord.

- I. *We certainly need that mercy.*
- II. *That mercy is still open for us.*
- III. *Only when that mercy is ours can we be blessed.*

We may remark that this mercy is open for us since Moses prays for it and his prayer is not in vain. We are blessed in the full sense of the word when God's mercy is ours, for then his saving work and his glory and beauty will appear to us, and our own work will be the worship and obedience of God, which will abide and not fade out. — Sin and death are two corners of the great cloth of truth which Moses has woven for us in this Psalm. We may pick up the entire cloth by catching it at these two corners:

How Shall We Pass into the New Year with the World Full of Sin and Death?

- I. *Acknowledge the sin and death in true repentance.*
- II. *Flee from the sin and death to the mercy of the Lord in true faith.*

Another pivot on which the entire text can be made to swing is found in v. 12 and in the fact that our lives are so short. So we outline as follows:

On This New Year's Day Learn Anew How to Number All Your Days.

They are

- I. *So terribly short because of God's wrath.*
- II. *Yet long enough to obtain the Lord's Mercy.*

In similar ways we may use other angles of the text from which to survey its contents and its message to us. We suggest the following: Pray To-day with Moses: "Lord Let Thy Work Appear unto Thy Servants!"—Another Year of Labor and Sorrow.—The Secret of True Gladness All through the New Year.

When now we come to the use of auxiliary concepts in outlining, all manner of possibilities open up for the preacher who has a trained imagination and understands the principles of his work. The wealth of thought in our text is full of suggestion to the mind that is fully awake. New Year's Day is like a *height* from which a person is able to gain an extensive view. Climb this Pisgah with Moses, and let him show you what lies before you in the days to come. Use his eyes that you may not see empty, delusive mirages, but the great realities that count now and for all time.—*Light* is another appropriate concept: Our Lives in the Light of eternity.—We may use the idea of a *vow*, or of a *motto*: A New Year's Vow from the Heart of Moses: "In thy name, O Lord!"—Business men like to *invoice* at the beginning of a year. Have you taken a true invoice of your life? Do it to-day with the help of Moses. Let him show you your liabilities, and then your assets.—These moderate attempts may indicate what is meant by employing an auxiliary concept in building an outline.

When the preacher's heart is all aglow with his text, and throbs with the desire to lift his people by the power of his text upward to God, there may flash into his mind, or slowly rise from his intensive meditation, some form of treatment that can be attained in no other way. Here is a faint effort in that direction:—On New Year's Day most men see little more than a happy throng of people going blithely into a new period of their lives with high hopes of earthly success and happiness. Some see more or less of life's shadows and disappointments, broken hopes and failures. Do you see anything more to-day? Rub the film from your eyes with the curative words of this great Psalm, so that you too may see

The Vision of Human Life that Moses Saw.

- I. *Men's lives run along an endless line of tombstones, until they reach their own graves.*
- II. *Yet men's lives come ever and anon to some lofty Gospel spire that points upward to the skies and to God.*

THE SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR

Ps. 73, 23-28

"The 73rd Psalm belongs to the category of *confessiones*, in which the Psalmist narrates the history of his inner life, his disease and its healing." It is the Book of Job in miniature, treating the same problem and arriving at the same conclusion, but without the dramatics which give the Book of Job its grandeur. In our Psalm the spiritual medicine is put up in a compact dose, so that one may take it all at once and be healed quickly. The author knew a godly family which lost by drowning its oldest son on a Sunday morning. That young man was a faithful church attendant, but on this one Sunday he went with his friends for an innocent outing. Arrived at the place the young men of the party took a swim, and the accident occurred. The father was completely prostrated, and for weeks no comfort took hold. What crushed him was the question: Why did God do this thing to him and his family when they had been so faithful, while nothing hurt thousands of families that never cared for God or Christ? One day he went with the author to visit a sick neighbor. The 73rd Psalm was read and briefly explained. It was the specific he needed. At last he found solid rock under his feet and rose from the slough of his despair.

Our text is the climax of the Psalm, the soul rising in the triumph of light and faith above the dark clouds of doubt and despair. Its brief sum is: *God is my portion for ever!* The wicked may prosper astoundingly and go on indefinitely in his pride. The godly may seem to serve God all in vain. From

a moral and spiritual standpoint such ordering of men's lives may seem utterly contradictory and wrong. And no philosophy of man is able to solve the dark riddle. But when the Psalmist enters the sanctuary of God, then at last he understands. In the light of the Word he beholds the end — all the prosperity and pride of the wicked consumed with terrors in the judgment, and the godly lifted from his crosses to endless glory. And so the Psalmist sings these last lines in the full assurance of faith, and with the vision of hope that maketh not ashamed.

23. **Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.**
24. **Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory.**
25. **Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.***
26. **My flesh and my heart faileth: *but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.***

The connective *v^e* is entirely adversative: **nevertheless**, but in a broad sense: no matter how the wicked may spread himself, and how the godly may seem to cleanse his heart in vain. In spite of such staggering experiences all is well: **I continually with thee**. There is no verb; but that Asaph is speaking of the present is quite plain. In the past he had almost fallen away, but now, and from now on, day by day, his heart is wholly with God. While Asaph states merely the fact of his constant communion with God, this involves on Asaph's part full faith and trust in God, and, in the connection presented by this Psalm, submission to the strange ways of God. What, on the other hand, this communion in-

volves on God's part the following verses depict. All is well when I am continually with God. However dark the day, strange the providence, disturbing the cross, my faith holding to God is happy; however fair the days, I know that the sunshine is not like the delusive joy of the wicked, with the terror of judgment hard behind it. — In v. 2 Asaph confesses that his feet were almost gone, his steps had almost slipped. What kept his faith from falling completely? Here is the direct answer: **thou hast holden me by my right hand**, literally: "by the hand of my right side," *yad* in the st. constr. A strong helper caught and held him steady and safe. For tottering faith when assaulted by doubt there is only one power to hold it, and that is God's own Word: "until I went into thy sanctuary," v. 17. The perfect tense of the verb refers to one act in the past. If Asaph had been abandoned to his own wit and wisdom, he would have gone down in unbelief. God kept his faith from slipping, and so now he sings with joy that he is continually with God. Let a man forsake the sanctuary and the Word and do his own foolish reasoning and thinking, and very soon he will be down, away from God, lost.

V. 24 and the following are highly expressive of what God will now do for Asaph, and at the same time of what Asaph has learned about God. To begin with, he sings: **Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel**. Amid all the dark providences of God, the painful experiences of the godly, the doubts and dangers that would catch at his feet, Asaph is safe. This **counsel**, *'etsah*, is God's plan of salvation, which deals with his children singly as well as collectively. The verb **guide**, the hiphil of *nachah*, includes both the spiritual guiding of our hearts by the Word, in which the gracious revelation of God's counsel is laid down for us, as well as the providential guiding of our lives by his power which operates in harmony

with his Word. There are mysteries especially in the latter, which in this life we will never comprehend. But with God in control, and his Word before us, we can sing with fullest assurance: "He leadeth me." — The first line of this verse deals with the course of our lives, the second deals with the goal: **and afterward receive me to glory**, *et postea in gloriam suscipies me* (Jerome). The adverb 'achar refers to what shall follow the guiding of God in this life; "afterward" = when this life is finished. The imperfect hiph'il of *laqach*, plainly future because of the preceding adverb, signifies a gracious reception, and strongly reminds us of the New Testament equivalent: "Receive my spirit" (Stephen), Acts 7, 59; compare Luke 23, 46 and Ps. 31, 5. — There has been debate on **glory**, *kabod*, which Koenig and Delitzsch read like Luther: *mit Ehren*, "with honor," an adverbial accusative; although this accusative may also be read as naming the goal: "to glory" (A. V.). Other explanations are strained and fanciful. The two constructions mentioned offer little difference in substance: to be received "with honor," is very much like being received "to honor." — All agree that Asaph here speaks with wonderful clearness of the final entrance of the believer into the glory of God. But too many persist in thinking this little more than an exceptional flash of clearness, and deny that during the Old Testament era the Israelites generally had this clear hope of blessedness with God in heaven. Especially do they lug in their perversions of "sheol" and "hades" as a realm of the dead, a sort of intermediate place between heaven and hell, where they suppose the souls of the dead went. This fignment they impose on the Old Testament believers as though they commonly held it and thus had no clear hope of heaven, nothing but a dismal, dreadful view of the hereafter. A few prominent exegetes led the way, and thus a sort of exegetical tradition was built up,

the lesser men piping the tune set by the greater. Some of these foolish commentators boldly carry their figment even into the New Testament; Meyer, for instance, literally runs amuck every time he meets the word "hades." But a true exegesis of our passage as well as of scores of others in the Old Testament reveals that the Israelites beyond question had both, a clear, full revelation and conception of heaven, and the heavenly hope and bliss of the believer. Asaph learned what he sings in v. 24 in the sanctuary, i. e. from the written Word then extant. When the perversions perpetrated on "sheol" are blown away, and the use of the term in the Old Testament is correctly understood, the old doctrine of heaven stands out clearer than ever.* When in addition one glances at the knowledge of the Jews in the opening days of the New Testament, how clearly and fully they knew of heaven, the resurrection of the dead, and the fire of hell, every trace of doubt is removed. Certainly,

* The Hebrew *sheol* is the place where death's power is displayed. All men are therefore said to pass into *sheol*, since all must give up this life and undergo death. The difference that divides men in death is generally disregarded in the Old Testament use of the term *sheol*, or rather the full light of revelation does not yet illumine the threshold of eternity when the prophets speak of passing into *sheol*. The Septuagint used the term *hades* for *sheol*. . . . *Hades*, however, goes beyond the indefinite Hebrew *sheol*; in the New Testament it is used to signify "hell," the place of torment for the damned. The light of revelation in the New Testament shows distinctly the great difference between men in death: the blessed and righteous go at once into Paradise, into the hands of the Father and of Christ, into heaven, whereas the unbelieving and wicked are cast into *hades*, that is hell. The godly never enter *hades*; and it is a perversion of Scripture to imagine *hades* as having two compartments, one called Paradise, a preliminary abiding place for the blessed after death, and another called "hell," a preliminary abiding place for the damned.—For a good discussion of the entire subject compare Zietlow, *Der Tod*, 63, etc. and 87, etc.—*Eisenach Epistle Selections* of the author, Vol. I, p. 523; cf. *Eisenach Gospel Selections*, I, 548.

the light of the New Testament on this subject exceeds that of the Old, but Enoch, Elijah, David in many passages, Asaph here, the prophets with Isaiah (at length) and Daniel to lead, show to any fair-minded student of the Word that the Old Testament light was like a lovely morning, not like the glimmer of a smoky lantern; and while promising the full noon-day, was itself already fully adequate for true faith.

Verses 25 and 26 revert to the key-note struck in v. 23: "I continually with thee." The first line is very brief: **Whom have I in heaven?** literally: "Who for me in heaven?" and implies the answer, as the next line shows: No one if not thee. This is the soul's highest expression of love for God. — The second line adds: **And none upon earth I desire beside thee.** This translation parallels the phrase "in heaven" and "upon earth." But *ba'arets* may be more naturally read as dependent on the verb *chaphatsthi*: "and without thee I have no pleasure in the earth," i. e. the earth affords me none. Luther's rendition, "If only I have thee, I care nothing for heaven and earth," is one of the gems of his translation, and brings out the exact meaning of the passage. This attitude of the heart is a true fulfillment of the First Commandment in the Gospel sense. The soul's only treasure is in reality God alone. In and with God the soul has everything; without him nothing. *Non tua, sed te*, which is: Not thine, but thee. Lose everything and keep God, and you have lost nothing and kept everything.

Verse 26 is a conditional sentence without the conditional particle; there is no "if." The virtual condition here expressed is one of reality: **My flesh and my heart faileth**, which here does not merely mean: if such a thing should ever happen; but: as it is actually happening. The verb *kalah* is strong and emphatically forward: "fail" in the sense of pine

away, die with languishing. "Flesh" and "heart" are counterparts: the outward and the inward man. "Flesh" is the physical substance as such, and "heart" the seat of the physical and mental life. Delitzsch in his *Biblische Psychologie*, 145-6, in describing faith as an activity of the "I" itself, remarks that in our passage, as in no other, this "I" is distinguished even from the heart. Man may believe with the heart, but even then it is the "I" that believes. The heart may fail and disappear, but even then the "I" of Asaph (believing) still has God. — Tersely, and thus very emphatically, the sentence is completed in the second line: **God the strength (rock) of my heart, and my portion for ever.** *Tsur* is "rock," here evidently the opposite of anything that fails and fades out; thus a sure stronghold (Ger. *Hort*), no matter what happens. The context makes us think of all the ills that come upon the godly. Even when these reach the last extremity this *tsur* holds firm. — *Cheleq* is the allotted "portion" which one receives and owns without dispute. In "rock" we have safety and assurance; in "portion," treasure and riches; *'Elohim* is both for Asaph. — And that *l'olam*, **for ever**, this minute and to all eternity. Here again is an opposite to "faileth." "Rock" is *place*, "for ever" is *time*, both never failing. Here Asaph once more reaches across death into the blessed world beyond where God is in glory. It is the clearest kind of faith and hope in life everlasting. Delitzsch says: even if the poet's outward and inward being sinks away, even then by the *merus actus* (mere act, i. e. faith) of his "I" he keeps clinging to God. In the midst of his natural life full of perishableness and sin a new personal life devoted to God has begun, and this gives him the guarantee that he cannot perish, as truly as God cannot perish to whom he is joined.

27. **For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish:**
thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.
28. **But it is good for me to draw near to God:**
I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,
that I may declare all thy works.

To establish a positive one often needs only to point to the corresponding negative. So here. This explains **for**, *ki*. The exclamation **lo** it to rivet the attention. The designation **they that are far from thee**, literally "thy distant ones," is plainly intended as the opposite of v. 23: "I continually with thee." The term *racheq* (Koenig) signifies "keeping oneself far from," and describes the attitude of unbelief. **Shall perish** is the piel of 'abad, "to lose oneself." John 3, 16 says of the believer that he "shall not perish." What the word means v. 18 says by adding: "is already judged"; and v. 36: "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." To perish is to lose salvation. — That this fate is due to the punishment of God the next line adds: **thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee**, which, however, should be the present tense: "thou destroyest." The verb *tsamath* signifies "to silence," and thus comes to mean "to ruin or destroy." See Matth. 22, 12: "And he was speechless," and then read how this wicked servant was cast into outer darkness. The word "destroy" is not even a twig on which to hang the Russellite or International Bible Students' doctrine of the final annihilation of the wicked. The ungodly perish (lose life and salvation for ever) when God finally silences their opposition in the judgment. — Where first they are called those "that are far from thee," they are now called **all them that go a whoring from thee**, characterizing more closely their wicked action toward God. This figure is frequent

in the Old Testament, and is used also in the New, viz. "an adulterous generation." The covenant of God's grace is like a marriage contract; they who break it are guilty of whoredom or adultery, which divorces them from God. The term brings out all the shamelessness and disgracefulness of unbelief.

In v. 28 Asaph once more, and in a final complete way, states his own attitude toward God: **But it is good for me to draw near to God, etc.** Plainly *v*^e is adversative, and *'ani* a nominative absolute: "But I — to draw near to God (is) for me good." In v. 23 Asaph said: "I continually with thee." Here he adds that this communion with God is due on his part to a drawing near. Faith seeks God again and again; consciously by a holy volition of its own it keeps approaching. This is the essence of worship, although the thought of worship is here not brought in. Of course, God always draws near to us first, even to us who believe, and by his grace stirs us to come to him. James 4, 8: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you"; Rev. 21, 3. *Tob* means "good" in the broadest sense, something that benefits, makes happy, and satisfies the soul. The ungodly see nothing good in getting near to God, they feel at ease only when away from him here. — What lies back of Asaph's drawing near to God is stated in the second line: **I have put my trust in the Lord GOD**; rather the present tense: "I put" etc. The word translated "trust" is *mach^eseh*, "refuge," or "place of refuge." And Asaph's refuge is **the Lord GOD, 'Adonay Yaveh** (the latter with the vowel points of *'Elohim* because *'Adonay* precedes). This double designation combines the all-ruling power of God with the covenant grace of the Lord. The idea of "refuge" thus matches the idea of "drawing near." Asaph goes to God as one flees from danger into his refuge and there finds bliss (recall "sanctuary" in v. 17). — Duhm calls the last line a purposeless appendix, though it is anything

but that. In v. 15 Asaph intimates that he almost voiced his doubt and unbelief when he tried with his own wisdom to solve the ways of God. He was graciously kept from doing so, found the true light, and now he tells us that in his safe refuge he will declare the Lord's works, for now he has the true key. So this final line rounds out the entire Psalm: **that I may declare all thy works.** The verb *saphpher* (piel) here means "to narrate," "to recount"; and all the *mal'ekoth* are the operations or occupations of God, all that he undertakes and does in his just, gracious, and wise dealings with men. The fact is that Asaph does this very thing right here in this Psalm, namely declare the Lord's works. Moreover, this final line turns in direct address to God: "declare all *thy* works." Asaph confides his purpose to God, for he will carry it out for his honor and glory.

SUGGESTIONS

Here is a text that should not be torn from its context. Whether we use it for the Sunday for which it is set, or for Sylvester Eve, for which it is very suitable, or for the Sunday after Christmas by a shift of Is. 63, 7-16 to Sylvester Eve, the context remains in force. There is little use in trying to build an analytical outline on this text, for the simple reason that the blocks of thought laid down in the pattern of this text cannot be left in their arrangement when it comes to the sermon, invariably we will be forced to rearrange. Kessler's outline, which is fitting for Sylvester Eve, shows that very clearly.

The Harvest We Gather from the Fields of the Old Year.

I. A twofold fund of knowledge.

- a) Without God nothing but destruction, v. 27.
- b) With God the highest good, v. 28a.

II. A twofold experience.

- a) No godly life without affliction, v. 26.
- b) But the Lord leads us safely, v. 23-24.

III. A twofold resolution.

- a) Nevertheless I am continually with thee, v. 23a.
- b) I will declare Thy works, v. 28c.

The theme could be improved by giving it a dose of color from the text, but the homiletical synthesis in the elaboration is admirable.

If the text is used for the Sunday after New Year the theme might be:

Lord, Guide Me with Thy Counsel in All the Days to Come!

Give me Asaph's *insight — trust — comfort — hope.*

A number of themes arise from the text itself. Here are some of them: God My Portion for Ever! — It is Good to Draw Nigh unto God. — Whom Have I But Thee? — Also various themes utilizing in one way or another the significant opening word "nevertheless": Nevertheless I Am Still With Thee! — Asaph Voices for Us Faith's Triumphal "Nevertheless." On the latter theme we might elaborate as follows: 1) It ends all doubt (context and v. 26); 2) It escapes all danger (v. 27); 3) It holds the sure anchor (v. 23a, v. 25, and v. 28); 4) It grasps the true blessing (v. 23b and v. 24); 5) It finds true peace (deduction from the whole).

THE EPIPHANY CYCLE

EPIPHANY

Is. 2, 2-5

The Epiphany cycle embraces seven texts, that for the Epiphany festival and those for the six Sundays after Epiphany. In its arrangement this cycle is the opposite of the Christmas cycle. Instead of leading us up to the festival, this cycle leads us gradually down from the festival height. It comes with a burst of glory on Epiphany day, and then lets the shining rays of that glory glow on through the following Sundays.

A comparison of the texts presented in this Eisenach Old Testament series for the Epiphany cycle, with the gospel texts of the old pericope line, shows that the two are intended to match. For Epiphany the old gospel text tells us how the Magi came from the East to the new-born Child in Bethlehem; our Old Testament text, Is. 2, 2-5, foretells how all nations shall flow unto the mountain of the Lord's house, and how many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. The parallel is thus quite plain. — The old gospel text for The First Sunday after Epiphany tells us how Jesus at the age of twelve went to his Father's house, and said he must be about his Father's business. Our text, Ps. 122, presents David singing: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." And the Psalm shows how concerned David was about the peace of Jerusalem. Again the parallel is evident. — The Second Sunday after Epiphany has the text on the wedding at Cana, where Jesus manifested forth his glory in the first miracle. The chief point of this text,

its real Epiphany idea, is often missed when practical souls allow their practical ideas to overshadow the glory of Jesus, and instead of preaching on him and his glorious manifestation speak on marriage and on wine. Our Old Testament text, Is. 61, 1-6, reveals all the grace of the Messiah, who shall preach good tidings and deliver the broken-hearted, the captives, the bound, etc., so that they shall build the waste places. A grand parallel, but one in which the Old Testament text exceeds the New. — The Third Sunday after Epiphany has the leper cleansed and the centurion's servant healed, in both cases a fine example of faith. The Old Testament text, 2 Kgs. 5, 1-19, certainly furnishes a close parallel in the cleansing of Naaman from leprosy and in the faith exhibited by this man. — The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany brings us Jesus who stills the tempest. Ps. 93 comes with the declaration: "The Lord reigneth," and follows with verses 3 and 4: "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea." The resemblance is very plain. — The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany speaks of the wheat and the tares. To match it we have Ezek. 33, 10-16, the righteous and the wicked, and what is said about forgiveness and penalty. — Finally The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany has the Transfiguration of Christ, and in our text Ex. 3, 1-6 Jehovah in the burning bush, and Moses bidden to remove his sandals because the place is holy ground. Putting them side by side the two lines are obviously parallel.

In a way this aids us in preaching. Yet it would be poor policy in each case to dwell on this likeness between the old gospel text read at the altar or lectern, and its Old Testament companion used in the pulpit. The help we get consists in having for our Old Testament preaching text the liturgical setting befitting it.

That, however, does nothing as yet in linking up the texts of this cycle to form some kind of a connected whole. In attempting so to link them the old gospel texts furnish us no aid worth mentioning. We must correlate these Old Testament texts as they stand without taking cues from the older texts. A. Pfeiffer seems never to have noted the parallel we have sketched above, but his linking of our texts independently of the old gospels is quite artificial and of no value whatever when it comes to pointing up each text for the purpose of using it in a true line of sermons. These texts do indeeds constitute a group. They are all dominated by the Epiphany idea, which is **manifestation**, and each text in its own way is linked to this central idea. — The Epiphany Festival itself reveals to us in words of prophecy *The New Testament Church in its World-Wide Attractive Beauty and Power*, Is. 2, 1-5. The preacher, however, must exercise care, lest in dealing with this great subject he trench on the following text. He must not launch out into the idea of going up to the mountain of the Lord's house. He should reserve this part of the subject for full treatment in the next text. — The subject of Ps. 122 as set for The First Sunday after Epiphany is *Our Love for the Church* (the Lord's house), which naturally includes also a perception of the glories of the Church, prayer for her welfare, and work for her good. — Is. 61, 1-6 is quite plain as the next link in the line. For The Second Sunday after Epiphany it presents *The Saving Power of the Messiah*, who is the Head of the Church; and this includes the blessed results of his power, and our elevation under its sway. — For The Third Sunday after Epiphany 2 Kgs. 5, 1-19 comes with the necessary corollary. Naaman healed of Leprosy shows us *The Necessity of Faith*. In the Church all the Savior's blessings are received through this subjective means. The text for the Second and Third Sunday

after Epiphany thus form a pair. — Ps. 93 for The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany describes in grand poetic language *The Ruling Power of Christ*, namely his majestic omnipotence, dominating the world, acclaimed by floods, waters, and waves, and for ever bound up with his holiness. This text is a mate to the one for The Second Sunday after Epiphany. That pictures Jesus' grace, this pictures his majesty — a theme exceedingly necessary for our times so free to dishonor Christ. — The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, with its text Ezek. 3, 10-16, evidently hinges on the word "turn," which accurs repeatedly. Its outstanding subject is *Repentance and Forgiveness as the Only Way to Life in the Church*. In no other way, and surely by no righteousness of his own, can a sinner stand before the majesty of Christ, his Judge. It appears that, just as the Second and Third Sunday after Epiphany constitute a pair, so again a similar pair is formed by The Fourth and Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. First the saving power, calling for faith; secondly the omnipotent power, calling for humiliation and repentance. — The final text, for The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany, Ex. 3, 1-6, forms the conclusion of the series. Its climax is in the words of Jehovah: "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He manifests himself in the burning bush, which is a type of Israel. Thus the Epiphany idea comes out plainly at the end. We may write down as the subject: *The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Our God For Ever*. — This grand line of Epiphany texts is not closely linked. Still they belong together, and they follow in due order. As they file past us with divine Epiphany grandeur, they call forth in our hearts deepest adoration. That adoration is our Epiphany answer to Christ's manifestation. Three of the texts are plainly subjective, those for The First, for The Third, and for The Fifth Sunday after

Epiphany purposely spaced thus: 1) gladness; 2) faith; 3) turning. The other four are objective in their contents: 1) the Church; 2) the Savior; 3) the Ruler; 4) the covenant God.

Our text is repeated almost verbatim in Micah 4, 1-4, and the question arises: Did Micah first utter this prophecy, or was it Isaiah? Or did both perhaps quote some older prophet? The first verse in our chapter reads: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." Those who think that Micah first received this revelation have difficulty with these words. If Isaiah is merely quoting how can he say that he himself "saw" this word? When Micah records this prophecy he does it without any preamble, which leaves us free to assume that he quotes Isaiah. These two prophets were contemporaries, Isaiah beginning his work 754 B. C., and Micah two years later.

At the time when Isaiah uttered this prophecy Judah was outwardly exceedingly prosperous. The people lived in great luxury, as we gather from 3, 16-26. Yet the spiritual and moral condition was rotten and ripe for judgment. Idolatry flourished, lasciviousness, oppression, bribery, and all kinds of corruption went on unchecked. Isaiah foretells the impending judgment, 2, 12 etc.; 3, 1 etc. Yet the prophetic address from which our text is taken begins with a wonderful promise concerning the grand new era which the Lord would usher in. His plans of grace will be carried out in spite of the fearful defec-tion of Judah and Jerusalem. Israel is still called to repentance, but if this people will not share in the promised blessings and glory, that changes nothing in God's plan — others will take Israel's place. What God's plan had in store Isaiah was allowed to see and to set down for all future ages. It is *the New Testa-*

ment Church in its World-Wide Preeminence and Glory. Here we have an Epiphany *manifestation* which shines with heavenly grace and grandeur, to arouse and at the same time to satisfy faith.

2. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted over the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

In *v^ehayah* at the head of a discourse *v^e*, **and**, is a usual Hebrew idiom. We may translate this perfect tense: **it shall come to pass**, when the context shows that the future is meant. Yet if we translate: *it comes to pass* in the last days," the sense is quite the same. Isaiah announces a mighty future development. There is no "if" about it. Men may believe it — so much the better for them; they may think it impossible, it shall come to pass nevertheless — so much the worse for them. — This marvel shall come to pass **in the last days**, lit. "in the latter part of the days." Where only two periods are contrasted the second may be called "the last." Delitzsch is absolutely sure that *'acharith hayyamin* always have an "eschatological sense." Yet in the present case he strangely expands this sense to include the entire New Testament era. The latter is quite correct, although it is misleading to call it "eschatologic." Chiliasts, generally, however, differ from Delitzsch who is also a chiliast, and restrict this "eschatological sense" to include only the 1000 years of Christ's glorious reign upon earth, and then interpret what follows as distinguishing these years of wonder. Now

the fact is that *'acharith hayyamin* simply signify the future, and the German equivalent is *dermaleinst*. Here Isaiah means the great period extending from Christ's first coming to his return on the judgment day. During this period there takes place what Isaiah was given to see. — In the Hebrew the predicate "fixed," or "assured," is put forward for emphasis; it is the participle nifal *nakon* from *kun*, always used as an adjective: **shall be established.** — By the **mountain of the LORD'S house** the prophet means Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, the elevation on which the Temple stood, which is here termed Jehovah's house, naming him from his ancient covenant of grace. — This "mountain" with its "house" Isaiah sees far off in the future "fixed" **in the top of the mountains.** Yet note well that he adds "hills" to these "mountains": **and shall be exalted above the hills, nissa'**, nifal participle from *nasa'*. "In the top of the mountain" and "above the hills" are parallel; so also the participles "fixed" and "exalted." And now we may learn what an error like chiliasm is able to do with otherwise sensible commentators. Figures so plain that even a tryo should recognize them as such are taken in a literal sense by these men. So they pile up all the mountains in the world into a great physical pyramid, and on top of this they set little Mount Moriah. Von Hofmann goes his friends one better and makes Mount Moriah hover and float above these mountains. Thus these proud mountains, they tell us, will no longer look down disdainfully on the little limestone hill in Jerusalem! Daechsel thinks this little hill will itself swell into such a stupendous mountain as to overtop all others. Gravely they argue whether *b^ero'sh* means "at the head of" or "on top of." That a physical elevation is meant by the prophet they assert in so many words, and that without a quaver. We are serenely told that "a new order of things" removes all difficulties in changing the topography

of the world, either by piling up the mountains, or by turning Moriah into a super-mountain and making it the center of the world. That "new order of things" is, of course, nothing but the imaginary millennial order, a kind of magic wand for making real any childish fancy one may entertain of the supposed triumphal Christian age. How in the world the nations of the earth are ever to get to the Lord's house when it is thus stuck up on an impossible height, these gentlemen do not deem it necessary to tell us. Will they use airplanes? But lo, this wonder-bubble bursts the moment we think of Isaiah's **hills**. After piling up all these terrestrial mountains, or swelling Mount Moriah's limestone hill out of all proportion, these commentators, possibly exhausted by their effort, have never one word to say on what Isaiah means by the "hills" in his statement: **and shall be exalted above the hills**. Why? Because these "hills" explode their fancies about the "mountains." — It is a piece of exegetical folly to assume that Isaiah is foretelling a physical preeminence of Mount Moriah over the mountains and hills of the world. When he speaks of "the mountain of the Lord's house" he means the worship of the true God for which this house was built. Alas, even among the Israelites this worship was neglected. "They burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills," Is. 65, 7. "Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed" (spiritual adultery), "even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifices," Is. 57, 7. These idolators "saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savor, and poured out there their drink offerings," Ezek. 20, 28. It was a mark of the righteous man that he "hath not eaten upon the mountains," Ezek. 18, 6. Israel looked down on Mount Moriah, and preferred to go up the mountains and

hills there to practice idolatrous rites like the lascivious heathen round about them. The divine preeminence of Mount Moriah, where alone truth and salvation were found, they would not recognize. And now Isaiah foretells the time when the worship of the true God and the desire for his Word will outrank all the idolatrous worship on mountains and hills. Instead of a handful of true Israelites in the Temple, multitudes from all lands will stream into the Church of God. Thus figuratively the Temple hill, or literally what it stands for and signifies, will overtop all idol hills and mountains, or literally what they stand for and signify. The fulfillment of this prophecy began when Christ sent his Gospel into all the world. We see a grand part of the fulfillment now as we look at the triumphant history of the New Testament Church. There is no religion that for a moment is able to compare with the Torah or doctrine of salvation in Christ. The charge that this is "spiritualizing" Isaiah's prophecy is hollow. He is indeed speaking of spiritual things, the New Testament Church, the Gospel of Christ, salvation for the world and true worship, and absolutely not of topographical monstrosities, physical impossibilities, and material millennial marvels. When spiritual things are clothed in figurative language it is by no means "spiritualizing" to explain the figures and state their spiritual meaning. All that Mount Moriah once stood for we have to-day in Christ and his Church; and in the whole world there is not, and according to Isaiah's prophecy never will be, anything so blessed, so great, and so glorious.

With fine literary art the pilgrimage of the people to the Lord's house, together with the motive impelling them, is now depicted. **And many people shall go** stresses the number of those going, for now we have *'ammim*, "people," where before we had *goyyim*, "nations." The goal, too, seems entirely accessible. The Church of the New Testament has always been easy

to reach. — As they go they **say** whither they go and why, prompting and encouraging each other: **Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,** The verb is *'alah*, "to ascend." One always "went up to the old Jewish Temple, no matter what the height from which one started. This imagery is here retained for the Church of the New Testament by the term "mountain." What all these people leave behind is low, base, wretched, and they are rising to what is truly high, great, blessed. Jesus says: "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid," Matth. 5, 14. — A second phrase makes the first clearer: **to the house of the God of Jacob.** Where "mountain" pictures the Church as exalted and glorious, far above all false religious or religious ideas, the term "house" pictures the Church as accessible. God dwells in that house; its door is invitingly open; there we may meet God, enter into relation with him, and dwell with him. In the name "LORD" the covenant God invites us; and the title "God of Jacob" repeats that idea, for it names one of the three great patriarchs with whom this covenant was made. Let us remember that this covenant is Gospel throughout; the law was given 430 years later. Moreover, we must recall that *'Elohim* whenever used with a possessive, as here, signifies the God of grace, he whose power and might is exerted in our favor. Compare Is. 40, 1, Third Sunday in Advent. Constant use had made the name "Israel" rather common; so Isaiah uses the choicer and more select name "Jacob," especially beloved of the Jews. But we must not think that sinful men can of themselves and by their own powers resolve to go to the God of the covenant and grace. There is no such thing as a spontaneous longing for salvation in any sinner's heart. "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in God or come to him." Only when men are drawn by God can they come to him. Jesus says: "No man can come to me, except

the Father which hath sent me draw him," John 6, 44; and this drawing is by means of the Gospel. That is indicated here in V. 2 by the high and glorious position of the Church, making her a magnet for men's hearts. It is more clearly indicated by the names "LORD" and "the God of Jacob," pointing to the covenant and to grace. In the New Testament this old covenant with the patriarchs is consummated, and the fulness of God's grace is revealed in Jesus Christ. — It is the Gospel that attracts these people, as they themselves say: **and he will teach us his ways, etc.** The verb *yarah* means "to shoot"; the hiphil (here the imper. hiphil, 3rd masc. sing., plus the personal suffix, *yorenu*) has the modified meaning "to give instruction," "to teach." The construction with *min* can hardly be the partitive: "something of his ways," Koenig; rather does it indicate source: "from or out of his ways." The idea is that the Lord's ways are full of instruction, and this store the people mean to acquire. The **ways** of Jehovah are the ones on which he desires to lead us. They are his Gospel ways, embodied in all the Gospel truths, teachings, and precepts. It would be a bad mistake, and the worst kind of legalism, to think of them as the commandments of the law. *Derek* is the trodden way, one constantly in use. "I have chosen the way (*derek*) of truth," Ps. 119, 30. Its opposite is "the way of sinners," Ps. 1, 1, i. e. full of sin, on which sinners love to walk; or "the way of wickedness," Ps. 146, 9, characterized by wickedness, loved by the wicked. The term is extensively used in the Old Testament. It is often termed "a manner of life," which is correct if meant in the Gospel sense: "his ways," on which the God of the covenant and grace leads us. When one longs for instruction in the Lord's ways, these ways have already attracted him; and the longing implies a readiness to respond. — The latter is brought out in the parallel clause: **and we will walk**

in his paths. 'Orach is a designated path, one designed for walking to get to a certain place, and pointed out for that purpose. To walk, *halak*, in the Lord's paths means first of all faith, and willing obedience. Note the objective idea in the Lord's ways and paths; and beside it the subjective "reception of teaching" and "walking." In substance the plurals "ways" and "paths" are identical with the singular "way," much like "the doctrines" and "the doctrine" of Christ; yet the plural always unfolds what the comprehensive singular combines into a unit.

It is with good reason, the prophet assures us, that the people speak as they do: **for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.** The emphasis is on the phrases "out of Zion" and "from Jerusalem." Jesus said: "For salvation is of the Jews," John 4, 22; cf. Luke 24, 47. Of course, "Zion" and "Jerusalem" are synonymous; likewise "the law" and "the word of the Lord." But with this admitted, are there differences, and is "the law" purposely connected with "Zion," and "the word of the Lord" with "Jerusalem"? Delitzsch simply combines Zion-Jerusalem; but he distinguishes *Thorah* as God's answer to man's questions, and *d'bar-Yahveh* as that by which God created and still re-creates spiritually. Yet *Tsiyyon* in its original sense is the hill on which the Temple stood, and thus reminds us of *God* who in that sanctuary dwelt among his people; while *Yerushalem* is the city surrounding the sacred hill and Temple, and thus reminds us of *the people of God* with whom he dwelt. — In the Hebrew "the law" and "the word of the Lord" are put side by side, in the chiasmic arrangement of the sentence. A. Pfeiffer makes the former the Word administered by the priests, and the latter that taught by the prophets. He makes the former convey salvation and reconciliation, the latter renewal and sanctification. Neither is sound. The first meaning of *thorah* with-

out the article is *instruction* coming from God through some prophet, *Weisung von goettlich-prophetischer Seite her* (Koenig); and *dabar* is word, or thing stated, and when used of the Lord *the revelation* he offers, also through some prophet. So these two are very close synonyms. The only difference seems to be that in *thorah* the Sender of the instruction is suggested, and thus very properly Zion is named as the place whence this instruction comes; whereas in *d^ebar-Yahveh* the people to whom this revelation is given and who thus have it, is indicated, and so "the word" is quite properly said to come from Jerusalem, the city of God's people.—The important thing here stated, however, is that this instruction and revelation **shall go forth** (*yatsa'*) from Zion and Jerusalem (*min* in each case). Originally it was meant for one nation, but now Isaiah sees it go forth to all people. God who gave the instruction, and the people who had the revelation, shall spread this treasure among all nations and many people. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth," Acts 1, 8; Matth. 28, 19; 24, 14. God employs the witness of the New Testament Church, but the Word itself shall run, i. e. have free course, and be glorified, 2 Thess. 3, 1.—No preacher should make *thorah* here mean the law as opposed to the Gospel. Both *thorah* and *d^ebar-Yahveh* are the great means of grace bringing reconciliation and justification, renewing and sanctification. In both are all the treasures of salvation, and for this reason they attract "many people."

4. And he shall judge among many nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

There are actually hardly any linguistic difficulties to iron out in this beautiful verse; even the translation conveys quite exactly what Isaiah wrote. But there is one important question which no commentator can possibly evade: Is Isaiah describing conditions as they shall be here on earth before the end, or as they shall be when the end has come? If, for instance, wars shall utterly cease on earth because all the nations submit to Christ, then a millennium is assured, whether it lasts a thousand years or not. But if here we have the final goal which the Church will reach at the end of the world, then a millennium is ruled out. A careful examination of the Old Testament sections involved reveals that they themselves fail to answer this question, except in an inferential way. The reason for this lies in the nature of these prophecies. These seers combine in one picture the beginning and the end of the New Testament era. Only Daniel and Zechariah have anything to say concerning the interval. Even John the Baptist, like Isaiah and the rest, sees only one grand picture: the Messiah with the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire on Pentecost Day, and the same Messiah with the fan purging his threshing floor, gathering the wheat and burning the chaff at the end of the world. An exegetical answer to the decisive question here involved can be derived only from the fuller New Testament revelation, in sections like Matth. 24, where Christ himself unfolds the future in actual detail. And here we learn beyond the shadow of a doubt, not only that wars, for instance, shall not cease during the final world-age, but that they shall increase as the end of the world approaches. Instead of a prospect of millennial peace on earth, the approaching end reveals that "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," and that "ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars," Matth. 24, 6-7. Luke 21, 25 etc. adds "upon the earth distress of nations,

with perplexity; men's hearts failing them for fear," etc. Here the answer to our question is recorded: this world-age will see no era of universal peace. Only by setting aside the plain exegetical principle: *Scriptura ex Scriptura explicanda est*, has any interpreter been able to cling to a millennium. By some construction of his own he dates his 1000 years somewhere in the future. A wide diversity appears among these chiliastic interpreters, especially when they leave hazy generalities and seek to offer a definite outline and correlation of the events foretold. Topping off this guess-work come the absurdities involved in the millennium itself, this mixture of a state incorruptible and a state still under corruption and death, heavenlike sanctification in the midst of the old wickedness and curse, eternal glory associated with earthly sordidness. It is all stirred into the kettle of these 1000 years—a hodge-podge so self-contradictory that it does not even require Scripture to refute it.—There are non-chiliastic commentators who, while they reject anything like a millennium, still imagine these prophecies will find their fulfillment this side of the end. Their scheme is to shave the prophecies down. Wars, for instance, shall cease only to a degree, only among those nations that accept Christ and the Gospel. Or they resort to the "if" exegesis—*if* the nations bow to Christ. These men are really a great comfort to the chiliasts, for it is easy for any competent chiliast to show that this toning down and this conditioning conflict with the prophetic texts as they stand.

In v. 4 we meet again the **nations** and **many people** of the previous verses. Now the Scriptures are a unit in telling us that while the aggregate of believers shall constitute a great host, the nations as nations will not enter the Church. State Churches for certain periods may look imposing outwardly, inwardly there is found at best only a small flock of

true believers. Jesus says: "This Gospel shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations," Matth. 24, 14; he does not say: "and the nations will believe." All that we hear is: "That many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," Matth. 8, 11. This shows how the Lord **shall judge among the nations**. It will be through his Church which has his Word, *thorah* and *dabar*. Before the Church was thus spread among the nations there was no Word among them to judge them. But, with the Church and Word present, all the crimes, vices, and sins in any nation, and all the wrongs between nations, receive judgment and stand condemned before this divine tribunal. The Lord's people point to his Word and the verdict there recorded against these ungodly acts. This is the advance verdict. It shall be followed and upheld at last by the Lord's judgment in person on the final judgment day. *Shaphat ben* = to judge between, or among. Men may and do scoff at this judgment, and refuse to let it deter them in their evil course. That judgment stands nevertheless, and its ultimate confirmation is sure.—The second verb *yakach*, hiphil, means **rebuke**, "take into discipline," "bring to account." It adds the punitive acts of God, those within a nation when its ungodliness runs to excess, to those between nations, when God uses the one to grind into the earth another. Thus the Lord himself, by these acts of his, accentuates the verdict of his Word and Church.—We have no prophecy anywhere in Scripture of a period when all the nations, or even a goodly number of them, will be truly believing or Christian nations, and will be ready to appeal their national differences to the Lord, or his Church, or his Word, ready to bow to this divine authority. The philosopher Kant, pacifists, and world reformers may believe that in a sinful world, full of selfish clashing

material interests, universal peace could nevertheless be established; and chiliasts may dream that in their millennium this possibility will become a reality: there is absolutely no foundation in the Scriptures for either view.

The nations and people **shall beat their swords into plowshares** by rewelding them. Symmachus, followed by Koenig, thinks *'eth*, plural *'iththim*, means "hoe," others "plowknife," or "plowshare." The former seems correct. Swords and javelins or spears were the old weapons, so we have the parallel line: **and their spears into pruninghooks** for trimming grapevines, trees, etc. — Two more statements enhance the picture of peace: **nation shall not lift up sword against nation** in actual warfare; in fact the military profession itself shall disappear: **neither shall they learn war any more**. What is described here is certainly not a relative condition, namely that in so far as the nations are converted they will cease from war and engage only in peaceful pursuits. As far as history is concerned, and the present prospects of history, the so-called Christian nations, with thousands of Christians in their armies, have fought the greatest of wars, and stand ready to do so again. The reason is only too plain: sin in the world, and sin even in these Christians. The revelations of Jesus settle it once for all that this condition will continue till the end of the world. Isaiah's words refer in the plainest way to the peace that shall rule in the new earth. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," and hence universal and total peace, 2 Pet. 3, 13. While the Lord's judging and rebuking begins in a manner during the New Testament era, the goal will not be reached until the final judgment. Then, indeed, there shall be absolute peace, for all evil shall forever be cast out. Many passages speak of this glorious consummation when

“the kingdoms of his world are become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever,” Rev. 11, 15. But these will be “the nations of them which are saved,” Rev. 21, 24. Into the New Jerusalem these “shall bring the glory and honor of the nations,” v. 26. They shall gather about the tree of life, “and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations,” Rev. 22, 2. — One may ask why Isaiah chose the picture of universal and total peace in describing the consummation of what the Word and the Church shall effect among men when the end is finally reached. The answer is not far to seek. Jesus says: “If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight,” John 18, 36. Exactly; fighting, war, and military power, is the mark of the nations and kingdoms of earth. The Church knows and uses only the power of the Word, with no earthly weapon whatever. Here she is still in the world, her members entangled in the affairs of the world, fighting wars included. As this is written we are still paying heavy war taxes. When the Church rises supreme at the last day and enters Jerusalem, her eternal City of Peace, everlasting peace will be hers under the glorious Prince of Peace.

5. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

The echo of this call and the admonition ringing through it resound in Israel's ears to-day. Would that they might hear! To-day this call is for us of other nations as well. Isaiah uses the beloved patriarch's name again. The **house of Jacob** has every reason to follow the faith of Jacob, and to turn from all false gods. — **The light of the Lord** is his *thorah* and *dabar*, his precious Gospel with its assured (v. 2 “established”) promises, the crown of which Isaiah has once more revealed. When Isaiah spoke and wrote these words his people were far gone

in defection from the Lord, and the prophet had the terrible duty of announcing God's judgment upon them. But even now yet the voice of grace called. It called, though the call was in vain. — **To walk** in the light of the Lord is to show faith by loving and loyal obedience. That light shines still. Up, let us walk in it by faith! Afar off in this light the glory shines, "Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blessed." Happy are they who now walk in that light, and finally enter the portals of eternal peace.

SUGGESTIONS

Luther writes: "You are not to think that among the Jews Isaiah was held in the same esteem as he is held by us to-day; on the contrary, he was the most despised of men and considered a senseless fool. For he himself testifies, 57, 4, that he was laughed at by the wicked, that they pointed the finger at him, and stuck their tongues out at him for shame. On this account, the very sermons which we admire and study they despised as old women's fables, save a few godly people, like Hezekiah and others. For it was custom among this people to mock the prophets, and to consider them senseless men, 2 Kings 9, 11. For at all times this is the fortune of God's Word and its servants, to be a mockery and a joke, just as we experience this to-day, and our descendents will experience the same thing." —

Our text is one of the shining jewels inserted in the dark pages of Isaiah's proclamations of judgment. The Church abides, rules, judges, triumphs, though the nation amid which it stands goes down in sin and punishment. It is none the less the cynosure of the world, the magnet of the ages, the crown and glory of the Lord's work in the midst of all mankind. Men may reject the Church, the Church shall judge them, and her judgment shall stand, because it is the Lord's.

The subject of our text stands out prominently; it is *the Church*, founded, upheld, endowed by the Lord, dispensing salvation, proclaiming judgment at his behest, and culminating in heavenly peace and blessedness. Not some minor feature or other, but the world-wide powers and work of the Church are here prophetically revealed. *The Church as the Lord's Epiphany in the World* is the message presented by this text for this day.

If simple analysis is applied the text outlines itself, for each verse may be made the basis of a part in the sermon, and that in the order in which the verses appear. In verse 2 we see the supremacy of the Church; in v. 3 the saving power of the Church; in v. 4 the triumph of the Church; and in v. 5, as the fitting conclusion, we hear the appeal of the Church. This rich and weighty material invites the best efforts of the preacher, both in composing an impressive outline, and in elaborating that outline in the most telling manner. Perhaps the following is suggestive:

“The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.” His temple is the Church, the hearts of all who receive him, gather around him, and walk in his light. Let all men know that in the whole world there is no power comparable in any way to that of the Lord’s Church. Here the Lord himself is revealed; here he dwells with his Word and grace; here he voices his judgments; here he leads to eternal peace and joy. In the Church the Lord reveals himself to men.—What though the world ignores and scorns the Church. Because the Lord’s power and glory are spiritual, eyes of flesh never will see it. But the Church will endure and triumph while all the works of men fade and perish. Blessed are they who see that

**In All the World There is Nothing Like the Lord’s Revelation
in His Church.**

I. So high.

- 1) Thousands of religions and religious ideas among nations and people, yet far from the Lord.
- 2) The Church is supreme, because it is the Lord’s house where he meets us with his covenant grace.

II. So attractive.

- 1) Thousands of treasures and values among nations and people, yet all empty at last.
- 2) The Church alone has the Word of the Lord, and in it the treasures of eternal salvation.

III. So triumphant.

- 1) A thousand judgments, decisions, self-justifications among nations and people, all of them false, all bound to be reversed in the end.

- 2) The Church alone judges with truth, condemns and acquits with the Word of the Lord; she alone will reach the peace and joy of heaven.

IV. *So blessed for you and me.*

- 1) Whither shall we go with our hearts and lives?
- 2) Here is the portal of heaven — come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

While the analytical treatment of this text lies on the surface, and is also both effective and attractive when properly handled, it allows very little variation, except in the way of formulation. It is like a house — one may paint it this color or that, yet it is quite the same house throughout. Synthesis always opens greater possibilities. It is more like taking the original timber and building now one, now another kind of a house. — Prominent in the text is “the law” and “the word of the Lord,” with the allied concept “the light of the Lord.” Starting from that center one may arrange the contents of the text in some fashion like this:

Our Epiphany is the Light of the Lord's Word.

- I. *It illumines the nations.*
- II. *So that they see the Lord's ways.*
- III. *Are corrected by the Lord's judgments.*
- IV. *And brought to the house of eternal peace.*

Conclusion: Let us by true faith and obedience walk in that Epiphany light! — Another prominent feature of the text is the repeated mention of the nations and people. Using that as a fulcrum one may lift the contents of the text in the following way:

The Epiphany Which the Nations and People Need.

- I. *The Epiphany of the Word.*
- II. *The Epiphany of the Church.*
- III. *The Epiphany of true judgment.*
- IV. *The Epiphany of heavenly hope.*

Sometimes in a synthetical arrangement the analytical order of the thoughts in the text may be followed, yet, as in this case, the logical order indicated by the theme may require that we rearrange. In the outline given the Word ought to precede the Church, although in the text this order is reversed. — The order given in the text may be completely reversed.

How Shall the Nations and People Reach Eternal Peace?

- I. *Let us bow to the Lord's judgments.*
- II. *Let us believe the Lord's Word.*
- III. *Let us prize the Lord's Church.*

One of the striking pictures in the text is that of the mountains. So we may ask:

Why is the House of the Lord Set on a Mountain?

- I. *It is the one refuge of the nations.*
- II. *It is the only light of the world.*
- III. *It is the sole portal of heaven.*

Homiletically on a low plane is A. Pfeiffer's suggestion: *The Glory of the Lord*: 1) Whence does it arise upon us? 2) How far do its rays extend? 3) What fruit would it bring forth on earth? The theme is a bare subject, entirely too wide, and suitable for scores of texts. The division consists of categories, good enough for text-study, but in the pulpit it has the marks of a tyro. Moreover, "glory" and "fruit" do not harmonize; glory brings no fruit. Some of the other themes this writer offers have the same fault: *The Last Times; The Kingdom of God*, a concept not even in the text. — The outline: *Walk in the Light of the Lord!* 1) What this means? 2) What this brings? has a theme with color from the text and the festival, but the parts (categories again!) are adapted to a class-room perhaps, not to a pulpit and a festival. Besides "walking" "brings" nothing — it takes us somewhere.

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Psalm 122

The old gospel for the day tells us of Jesus at the age of twelve in the Temple, hearing, asking questions, lingering there loth to leave, and saying to his mother that he must be about his Father's business. Our Psalm voices likewise *the love of the True Worshipper for the House of the Lord*. We hear the rapture of his love in his admiration of the house and the city which it graced; and the concern of his love for the peace and prosperity of that city. All this is easy to translate from its Old Testament setting to the New Testament time in which we live.

This is one of the fifteen short Psalms which form a little separate psalter in the Book of Psalms. Each of them carries the title: "A Song of Degrees." There has been much debate as to what the Hebrew term here translated "degrees" really means. Luther translated it "*im hoehern Chor*." Gesenius seems to have found the solution. These Psalms are not built, like most of the others, in a parallism of lines (see the introduction to Is. 40, 1-8, The Third Sunday in Advent, on this point), but in a step-like progression, each new line taking up a term or expression from the one just preceding it, thus building up a kind of artistic climax. These "Songs of Degrees," or "Gradual Psalms," thus derive their name not from their liturgical use, i. e. from being sung by the festive pilgrims at various points of their approach to Jerusalem and the Temple, or on the supposed fifteen steps from the women's court to that of the men; but from their peculiar literary structure, which also caused them to be grouped together.

Another point is the authorship, both of our Psalm and of the rest, and coupled with that the approximate time of composition. "Of David" appears in the old caption of ours and of three others. But some of the best codices omit this name from our Psalm. So we are left to internal evidence, which is not decisive, and the wide range of conjecture, always influenced by personal views. Those who cling to David's authorship generally make David project himself into the future. They think he imagines himself as one of the throng going up to the Temple which his son Solomon would in due time build for the Lord. This seems both artificial and unnatural. Others drop David altogether and conjecture a later author; some an author shortly after the reconstruction of the Temple after the exile, and some even much later than that. Nearly all read the Psalm as sung by a pilgrim going with the festive throngs up to the Temple, yet Delitzsch interprets the tenses of the verbs so that the pilgrim leaves the Temple and the city on his journey back home. — Three points deserve notice in our Psalm. Twice the singer mentions "the house of the Lord," which means the Temple. Then he describes Jerusalem as a city builded compact together, i. e. the houses compactly filling the area within the walls. Finally, we are told of the tribes of the Lord going up to Jerusalem. That shuts out the time of David who never saw the Temple and who never was invited to go into it. It shuts out likewise the time after the division of the kingdom, when only two tribes were left to gather at Jerusalem. The period after the exile is entirely barred out. We are in the long reign of Solomon. The Temple rose in its glory; Jerusalem was an imposing city; the tribes of Israel gathered for the festive weeks of celebration. The author of the Psalm is not known. All that we can say of him is that he was one who loved to go with the hosts of pilgrims to the Holy City and its

wonderful sanctuary. For the preacher that is quite enough. He may regret that he cannot use the name David, and gain this personal touch for the sermon; but he can make up for that in other ways.

1. **I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go into the house of the LORD.**
2. **Our feet shall stand
within thy gates, O Jerusalem.**
3. **Jerusalem is builded as a city
that is compact together:**
4. **Whither the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD,
unto the testimony of Israel,
to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.**
5. **For there are set thrones of judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.**

The Psalm opens dramatically with a personal confession of great joy. We must imagine the singer after his journey to the Holy City in the midst of his fellow pilgrims. His words are appropriate to the moment when he has entered Jerusalem; they befit still better some hour during the days of worship in the Temple when he lingers on the Temple hill and looks out over the city. First of all he thinks of the start made some time ago from his distant home. Many of his godly neighbors gathered together there to form a caravan for the journey. We see the same picture in the joint journey of Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem, and then back again to Nazareth, in company with their kinsfolk and acquaintance. **I was glad** might he translated: "I am glad," as Luther also has it, yet the verb must be read as referring to the past, which the next verse also plainly shows. *Samach* means to have an exalted feeling, and thus

“to be glad.” — The object of this glad feeling are the persons who came and said to the singer: We are going into the house of the Lord. There is a participle for the persons: “those saying,” although in translation this is well rendered: **when they said unto me.** — The real cause of the singer’s gladness lies in what was thus said: **Let us go into the house of the LORD**, *nelek*, from *halak*, an indicative: “We are going” etc. Since the words express a resolution, *ibimus* here is virtually *eamus*. Their purpose is not mere information, but an implied invitation for the singer to join this company. — The goal is **the house of the LORD**, which must mean the Temple, hardly the Tabernacle of David’s time. Nothing is said of a special occasion producing this resolution of the singer’s friends. That is implied. The Israelites attended the ancient Jewish festivals in large numbers. We will hardly go wrong when we assume some occasion of this kind. The singer’s gladness on hearing these words of his friends already indicates that he happily joined their company and journeyed with them. To spend days on the journey, and days at the festival, he esteemed no loss, but a great spiritual gain. The climax of it all was the attendance at the Lord’s house, i. e. participation in the festive worship of the Lord. It is certainly a delight when people thus band together, mutually invite and encourage one another, and all feel drawn to attend the worship of the covenant God. We often sadly miss this joy among our people; but when we find it, how it stirs our feelings and fills us with spiritual delight.

When v. 2 is translated with the future: **Our feet shall stand**, we get the idea that these people banding together to go to Jerusalem uttered these words, thinking of how they shall arrive at their destination. But the periphrastic *‘om^odoth hayu* should be rendered by the present: our feet “stand”; lit.

“have come to stand, and thus are now standing.” When Delitzsch asks why then the simpler *‘am^odu* was not used, the answer is that the periphrastic form with its participle expresses a condition enduring at the time. These people are standing within the gates of Jerusalem, not as tourists for an hour, but as visitors for the entire festival period. And it is the singer who is telling us this, speaking for himself as well as for all his company. There is an implication here that should not be missed: if he was glad when the start was made, now that Jerusalem has been reached and they are all enjoying the festival, this gladness is mightily increased. — There seems no need to picture the singer as just newly arrived within the gates. The following verse makes one think that he had been in Jerusalem awhile, and now, perhaps from the Temple hill, looks out over the city. **O Jerusalem** is dramatic personification, and surely fits such a situation far better than one where the company had just entered the gates. We should note, too, the correspondence between “the house of the Lord” and “Jerusalem.” This was the City of Peace, *shalom*, because *Yahveh* dwelt in her midst in his holy habitation, the Temple. For us, when we think of the New Testament Church, “the house of the Lord” and “Jerusalem” may melt together as designations for that Church; yet a distinction can be made: the Temple makes us think of the Lord’s presence in dispensing Word and Sacraments as means of grace, and “Jerusalem” makes us think of the believers who dwell with the Lord and walk in his ways.

The next three verses are a description of Jerusalem. The previous verse ended with the address “O Jerusalem.” V. 3 picks this word up again, and adds something to it. But not in the deliberate, cold narrative form of our English translation: **Jerusalem is builded, etc.** No; this is still personal address: “Thou, Jerusalem, that art builded!” The

singer has the city right before him and goes on addressing her. — The verb *banah* means “to build,” hence the modifier *habbenuyah* = “that is builded.” Led by Gesenius the commentators come in and translate *restituta*, restored, “rebuilt,” and thus jump to the time after the exile and the restoration of Jerusalem under Nehemiah. For good measure they picture the singer as comparing in his mind the old ruins and now the restoration. The term in question, however, can be translated “built up again” only when the context demands it, and there is no trace of such a demand in our Psalm. In fact, the mention of “the tribes” shuts out the time after the exile completely. Delitzsch clings to “rebuilt” because it seems that the brief Hebrew line of poetry must be complete in its own thought. Yet he would be hard put to it to show that the line: “Thou Jerusalem that art built up again,” is in the slightest degree more complete in thought than the line: “Thou Jerusalem, that art built up.” As far as completeness goes both are on a par. What the poet sees is a great city, not in course of construction, with part of its walled-in area still waiting for buildings, but a city completely built, the area within its walls all filled up. — This, in the second Hebrew line, he calls it **a city that is compact together**. The *ki* in *ki'ir* is the *ki veritatis*: “just as,” “actually as.” The pual of *chaber* means “to be combined,” and *yachdav*, “together,” intensifies this idea of compactness. The area of Jerusalem, unlike that of most cities, was determined by its peculiar topography. Stanley, in *Sinai and Palestine*, writes: “The deep depressions which secured the city must have always acted as its natural defense. But they also determined its natural boundaries. The city, wherever else it spread, could never overleap the valley of the Kedron or of Hinnom; and those two fosses, so to speak, became accordingly, as in the analogous case of the ancient towns of Etruria, the Necropolis

of Jerusalem." The great city walls enclosed this fixed area, and thus emphasized the compactness of the whole. The old Jewish synagogue took "thou that art built" in the natural sense of "thou that are built up," or "built high," and conceived of Jerusalem built thus, as a type of the heavenly Jerusalem. Meyfarth appropriated this idea in his lovely hymn:

"Jerusalem, thou city fair and high,
 Would God I were in thee!
 My longing heart fain, fain to thee would fly,
 It will not stay with me:
 Far over vale and mountain,
 Far over field and plain,
 It hastes to seek its Fountain,
 And quit this world of pain."

In v. 4: **Whither the tribes go up**, the verb *'alu*, from *'alah*, is the perfect, and covers what the tribes did all along and continued to do when the poet composed these lines. That means that this Psalm was written long before the exile. Delitzsch should not try to brush this evident fact aside by telling us that long after the exile the twelve tribes were mentioned, as in Rom. 11, 1 (not pertinent here!); Luke 2, 36; James 1, 1. He really must show how ten of these tribes could go up to Jerusalem, first after their separation from the other two tribes, and secondly after they were completely lost in far-off Assyria. To the true Jew Jerusalem and the Temple were always "up." The *she* attached to *sham* is the *she relationis* = *'asher*. — The last word "tribes" is picked up in the next line as an apposition: **the tribes of the Lord**, *Yah*, the Eternal, thus shortened in composition from *Yahu* or *Yahyeh*, the abbreviated *Yahveh*. They came as the Lord's chosen people to worship him. — What does *'eduth l'eyisra'el* mean? Hitzig, followed by Delitzsch and others, takes it to mean "statute for Israel," as in Lev. 23, 14; 21; 31,

namely the command for all male Israelites to gather at the three great festivals at Jerusalem, Ex. 23, 17; etc. The construction is said to be an apposition to the entire previous sentence, but it looks much more like a parenthetical insertion. Either way it appears disjointed, and without a reason for being thrust in. It is a far better to read *'eduth* with Ewald as signifying the "Testimony" laid up for Israel in the ark of the covenant, namely the two tables of the law, Ex. 25, 16 and 21; 40, 20. Before this Testimony the pot with manna was placed by Aaron, Ex. 16, 34. Thus **unto the testimony of Israel** (really: "for Israel") points to the most sacred thing in the sanctuary of the Temple. The construction is an accusative of specification. It was this Testimony that in large measure drew every true Israelite to attend the great festivals. Luther's *zu predigen dem Volk Israel* is substantially correct. These tables of the law kept testifying and preaching of Jehovah to all the assembled hosts. "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." Mal. 2, 7. Going up to the Temple the worshippers bowed before this Testimony, honored, and accepted it. Here is still more internal proof that our Psalm was written during the time of the first Temple. — The final line thus has its proper setting: **to give thanks unto the name of the Lord**. His "name," *shem*, is the revelation by which he makes himself known. In a way it stands for the Lord himself, but always only for the revealed Lord, who by his name or revelation of himself draws nigh to us, and to whom we by his name and revelation can on our part draw nigh. The Lord's name is the divinely given and absolutely necessary medium for all our worship. In any way to deviate from that revelation is to worship what we know not, John 4, 22. The law (Testimony) was such a revelation, lifting Israel far above all surround-

ing nations. And let us remember that this law or Testimony, while it had the Ten Commandments on stone as its Old Testament center, embraced the entire Levitical worship, with all its types and symbols, pointing to Christ. The real covenant with Israel, which was marked by the law, antedated that law by 430 years. — Reason enough, then, for Israel to **give thanks** (*yadah*, here with *l*^e) to the Lord. The festival services can be summarized as thanksgiving, for they were marked throughout with praise and honor to the Lord. Here, too, we see that the Psalmist properly combines what belongs together: first, the gift of the Lord in the ark of the covenant, the Testimony of the law tables (objective and sacramental); secondly his people's thanksgiving (subjective and sacrificial). Thanksgiving hangs in the air, unless it has a divine gift to rest upon. Luther: "These two (testimony and thanks) mean nothing else than that in Jerusalem was the appointed place where *the Word* was to be taught and *prayer* offered. But these ought to be written in golden letters, because David says nothing about the other services, but only these two. He does not say that the Temple was divinely appointed, that there the victims should be sacrificed; that there incense should be offered; that oblations and sacrifices should be brought; that each one should by his gifts show his gratitude. He says nothing about these things, although only in the Temple were they commanded to be done. He makes mention only of prayer and thanksgiving."

The causal *ki*, in v. 5, would say that Jerusalem was the religious center because in the first place it was the governmental center; while the affirmative *ki* would emphatically add that besides being the religious center Jerusalem was also the governmental center. We have our choice between the two: **for** there are set etc.; or: **yea**, there are set etc. By **thrones of judgment** are meant the official seats of

the judges. The word "thrones" is significantly repeated in the apposition: **the thrones of the house of David**. Who the judges were we are now unable to say. Perhaps they sat in some Temple building, as afterwards the Sanhedrim sat in the Gazzith. A great city and nation as a matter of course had to have proper courts and judges. The "house of David" is mentioned in this connection because the highest judicial authority was vested in the king, and Israel's kings were descendants of David. Lesser judges derived their authority from the ruler. Jerusalem was first made the royal seat and capital before the Tabernacle was placed there, and the Temple was built under David's son Solomon. As the seat of supreme judgment Jerusalem had an added glory in the eyes of the Psalmist. In Israel church and state were combined, and all judgments were rendered, not according to laws made by the nation or its rulers, but made by the Lord himself. In making applications from v. 5 beware of Romanizing or Calvinizing comments which would teach us that the church and religious powers should direct our present earthly governments. Jesus said: Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Spiritually indeed, and in the end, the Word shall judge the world, Is. 2, 4 in the previous text, and John 12, 48.

**6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
they shall prosper that love thee.**

**7. Peace be within thy walls,
and prosperity within thy palaces.**

**8. For my brethren and companions' sakes,
I will now say, Peace be within thee.**

**9. Because of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek thy good.**

The Psalmist has sung of his great joy and the weighty reason for it. It all centered in "the house of the Lord." He now sings of his great desire, and what this would have; again it centers in "the house of the Lord our God." In v. 1, others addressed the singer, and their words awoke a glad response in his heart; now the singer addresses these others whom he had accompanied to the Holy City, and we may be sure his words find a glad response in their hearts. — **Pray for the peace of Jerusalem**, Delitzsch reads: "Wish Jerusalem good fortune." But *sh^elom* is construct, hence our translation must stand. *Shalom* means "peace" in the sense of undisturbed and unimpaired safety. The sense is: Pray to the Lord that no harm or injury may befall Jerusalem, that she may continue safe and sound. Jerusalem is so dear to the singer because the house of the Lord is situated there. — The next line: **they shall prosper that love thee**, is really a prayer: "may they prosper" etc. The singer thus himself makes the start in praying for Jerusalem by praying for those that love her. There may be false Israelites, as there are hypocrites among the faithful now. This prayer is not meant for them. The hiphil *yishlayu*, from *shalah*, means to be tranquil and at rest. The English "prosper" must not mislead us. Earthly prosperity is so often found among the ungodly, Ps. 73. What is meant here is practically the same as peace. We may put it thus: May they have peace with God, Rom. 5, 1; a tranquil conscience; no misgivings amid trials; no fears in the hour of death. It is a masterly touch to combine love for the Church with prayers for the Church. Only he that loves the Church will pray for her; they that will not pray for the Church do not love her. Are we daily praying thus? Is our love without this necessary fruit? Our prayers are the measure of our love. The third link is tranquillity and rest for those that love and pray. As members

of the Church who love and pray for her we share in all the other prayers poured out for her by loving hearts. He is a rich man who has a stake in every ship that plows the sea; he is still richer, with a wealth he cannot lose, who has a blessing asked for him in every prayer that rises for the Church.— In the original note the refined alliteration grouped around the City of *Shalom*; four of the five Hebrew words in the last line contain *sh* and *l*.

In v. 7 both “peace” and “prosperity” (tranquillity) are taken up again, which is characteristic of these songs of degrees. By *hel*, the plural translated **walls**, is meant the open space about a fortification or wall. No enemy from without is to disturb the peace; i. e. security, of Jerusalem. By **palaces** are meant the stately building which fill the city. No civil strife of factious spirit it to destroy the inward tranquillity of Jerusalem. This beautiful double prayer fits the Church of all ages. May no enemy attacking from without rob her of safety, and no dissension from within rob her of tranquillity. There will, of course, be many attacks — there will be billows and breakers. Else why this prayer? Yet Jesus rides in the ship, and the peace that passeth understanding is still ours. There will be false brethren within. Else why this prayer? Jesus shields the flock from the hirelings and keeps them safe in his fold. Yes, the Church is a war-town, and therefore a walled town. Her bulwarks are her doctrines and confessions. Let her keep these intact, and never cease her prayers to that end.

Verse 8 takes up those “that love thee” from v. 6. They are now called **brethren and companions**, lit. “friends,” for one faith joins them, and one love moves them. In the Lord’s house they constitute one family. For their sakes, *ma’an* with *l^s*, the singer utters his prayer. For after all our great concern need not be the Lord, or his Word and Testimony.

Nothing can ever touch or harm these. Our concern must be for the people of the Lord, for the believers and confessors of his Word and Testimony. **Peace be within thee** for their sakes, means that their souls, and their faith, love, and obedience may be uninjured. It is well with a city when it is well with its citizens. It is well with the Church when it is well with its members. With the Lord it is always well, and nothing has ever harmed his Word.

The conclusion of the Psalm returns to its beginning, forming a golden ring of the whole, set with shining jewels. Thus "the house" of the Lord is named again as in v. 1, only now we have the full name: **the house of the Lord our God**, he who is the covenant Lord, and the God whose power is exerted in grace and goodness towards us. As that house attracts all God's people (v. 1), so it also unites and combines them (v. 8-9). It is the Lord's home here on earth, and thus their home too. — The Psalmist adds to his prayers and desires his personal resolution: **I will seek thy good**, strive for it in every way, by thought, word and deed. As one has well said: "I will throw my energies into it; my powers, my faculties, my property, my time, my influence, my connections, my family, my house; all that I have under my command shall, as far as I have power to command, and as far as God gives me ability to turn them to such a use, be employed in an effort to promote the interests of Zion." The **good** of Jerusalem for which to strive should be our highest desire is the true spiritual good of all her children; that is why the singer said "thy good," that of Jerusalem. This is not, however, what we in our wisdom may conclude to be good for the members of the Church, but what the Lord himself once for all has designated in his Word and Testimony as truly good. Caiaphas thought it would be good for the chosen nation to have Jesus put out of the way, and he had him put out of the

way. That is an extreme case, but it shows the true direction of all self-chosen efforts at blessing the Church. Some think they are working mightily for the good of Jerusalem when they ignore or shave down some of the Lord's doctrines, and misuse his Word in support of erring doctrines. Some feel certain they are blessing Jerusalem when they reduce her confessions, justify practices in conflict with the Word, unite with men who deviate from the Word, and to top it all off convince themselves by specious arguments and spurious interpretations that the Lord delights in what they do. They often boast of their success, the crowds they gain, the mighty works they do (Matth. 7, 22), the money they collect, and imagine that these are sure evidence that Jerusalem is receiving what is "good." In the judgment the Lord will repudiate it all, even as he has already done it in his Word (Matth. 7, 23). Beware of perverting this little word "thy good." Jerusalem's good is the one pure doctrine of the Word and its united confession with lip and life; the repudiation of every error, whether advanced by word or deed, and of all who have come to identify themselves with such errors. Jerusalem's good is to know the Lord's will as his Testimony records it, and *ex animo*, i. e. from the heart, to accept and obey it in the entire life. That "good" let us seek. It is worthy of the sweat of the noblest.

SUGGESTIONS

The natural division of the Psalm offers itself at once as an obvious division for the sermon. In this simple analytical treatment there are just two things to do: We must decide on a coordinate formulation of what the two parts of the Psalm contain; and we must formulate a theme that will properly cover these two parts. Of course, we may mold the theme first, and then the parts, filing each in turn as may be needed. The first verse of the Psalm in a way summarizes the whole,

for the entire Psalm is but the unfolding of the declaration: "I was glad." So we may make our theme:

I Was Glad When They Said Unto Me: Let Us Go Into the House of the Lord!

This spiritual gladness we unfold in the two directions marked by the Psalmist himself, by asking:

- I. *What lies back of that gladness?*
- II. *What flows out of that gladness?*

While this division is only formal, it nevertheless enables us to unpack in our elaboration all that the Psalm offers. For back of that gladness lies: 1) The Psalmist's love for the Church (Jerusalem, and the house of the Lord); 2) His joy in the fellowship of the Lord's Testimony (Word); 4) His desire to worship as the Lord has ordained (give thanks unto the Lord); 5) His recognition of the Lord's governance (thrones of David). And as the fruit of his gladness we find: 1) His great concern for the Church (Jerusalem; brethren and companions' sakes); 2) His prayers for her peace and prosperity (security and tranquillity); 3) His desire to work for her good.

A more abstract formulation is indicated in our introduction:

The Love of the True Worshipper for the House of the Lord.

- I. *The rapture of his admiration for the house of the Lord.*
- II. *The concern of his devotion for the house of the Lord.*

The trend of the elaboration will be like that of the sketch above.

A subtle legalism may turn the sermon in a wrong direction. This appears in the outline in *Sermon Sketches on the Old Testament Eisenach Texts*: The Christian Who Loves His Church. I. He goes to church. II. He prays for the church. III. He works for the church. Here we have what all *this Christian does* for his church. Now, in the first part the elaboration brings in something of what *the church does* for this Christian, as a reason for his attending the church. But our study of the Psalm shows that this element deserves

far greater prominence. It would be truer to the spirit as well as to the letter of the Psalm to outline in this direction: The Christian's Love for the Church. I. He is enraptured of the blessings the Church bestows on him. II. He is prompted to show his appreciation of these blessings. Yet even so all the text color is left out in the outline and can appear only in the elaboration.—More of this color is obtained in a formulation like this:

The Epiphany Call of the Church:

Let Us Go Into the House of the Lord!

Heed this call, for:

- I. That house is the home of God's Church.*
- II. That house is filled with treasures and blessings.*
- III. That house should have our prayers and service.*

There are synthetic features in this arrangement. In the first part one should combine what v. 4 says of the tribes that go up to Jerusalem for the Testimony of Israel, with what v. 1 says of the friends who invite the Psalmist. But combinations like that are quite naturally made.

Breaking away from the line of thought as arranged in the Psalm itself, and rearranging its rich material in a line of our own, while more difficult, well repays effort. Here is an attempt:

There was no doubt about it, the Temple at Jerusalem was the house of the Lord, where God drew nigh unto his people, and his people drew nigh unto him. Our churches now take the place of that Temple. Do they do it in a true spiritual sense? Let us look into this Psalm and see.

When are Our Churches Truly the House of the Lord?

- I. When the Lord is in them, and we go there to meet the Lord.*
- II. When the Lord's Testimony sounds in them, and we receive that Testimony.*
- III. When the Lord and his Testimony become our chief delight and concern.*

In synthesis like this one may often weld together the statements of the text and the applications one intends to make of them for the hearers. This is a broader type of synthesis:

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem!

- I. *That all our churches may be true houses of the Lord, where his Word and Testimony is supreme.*
- II. *That all our congregations may be tribes of the Lord, a true New Testament Israel of believers.*
- III. *That all our services may give thanks unto the name of the Lord, and be acceptable to him.*
- IV. *That neither foes from without or falseness from within may draw a single soul away from the Lord.*

This formulation is rather long, and it is not uniform. Let the brethren improve on it! — One might use the words of Meyfarth's hymn concerning the city "fair and high," but it would have to be in a different sense, since he meant the Jerusalem above, and we mean the Church on earth. Langsdorff has this theme: *The Pilgrim's Song Concerning Jerusalem, the City Fair and High*. He follows categories in the division, which is too cheap. Moreover, these categories pivot on a word that is not in the theme at all, namely, the word "joyful." The divisions are: The pilgrimage 1) is joyful; 2) why joyful? 3) how the joy expresses itself. The whole thing is awkward. We should prefer to outline in this fashion: This pilgrim sings of Jerusalem as 1) The City of the Lord's house; 2) The city of the Lord's Word; 3) The city of the Lord's people; 4) The city of the Lord's worship.

When one uses more or less synthetic rearrangements of the great thoughts in the text, any of its outstanding points may be elevated into a theme, if the other thoughts can be properly grouped under the point thus chosen so as to form a compact and well-articulated whole. Theme thoughts thus offering themselves are the following: the peace of Jerusalem — the good of Jerusalem which the Psalmist intends to seek — the testimony of Israel about which the tribes of Israel gathered — Jerusalem, whither the tribes of the Lord go up. Let us try to use the first of these theme thoughts:

The Psalmist's Epiphany Petition:**Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem!**

Peace, or security — for the *pure preaching* of the Word — for the *acceptable worship* of the Lord — for the *sweet fellowship* in the Lord's Word, worship, and work.

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Is. 61, 1-6

Please read the introductory remarks to Is. 40, 1-8 on The Third Sunday in Advent, and to Is. 63, 7-16 on The Sunday after Christmas, and note the place of our text in Isaiah's great epic. We are in the third great triad, which describes the New Testament era and its glorious consummation at the end of the world, ch. 58-66. We are in the second sub-triad of this great section, ch. 61-63, 6. In ch. 60 of the first sub-triad the prophetic description of the exaltation of the church began. Our text begins the second sub-triad, and pictures the height and fulness of this exaltation. Be sure to study this entire setting of our text.—The true Israel carried over into the New Testament Church shall have a tremendous inflow of Gentiles, and shall enter upon an era of greatest spiritual blessedness, marked in good part also by outward prosperity, culminating eventually in the final destruction of her foes and in her own everlasting exaltation. Throughout there shall be made manifest (note the Epiphany idea) *the saving power of the Messiah Jesus Christ*, which is set forth specifically in our text. That which began when Jesus in Nazareth took the opening words of our text, and declared that these words were being that day fulfilled in the ears of his hearers, Luke 4, 21, has continued increasingly up to the present day, and will go on thus to the end. Our text takes in more than the words used by Jesus on that occasion, but the additional words are all to the same effect. The closing verses of this sub-triad, namely 63, 3-6, show that the end of this great New Testament era will be marked

by the complete destruction of all the foes of the church. This judgment is touched in v. 2 of our text in the reference to "the day of vengeance of our God." While the end will usher in the complete judgment, the entire era will be marked by preliminary judicial acts. One outstanding act was the destruction of Jerusalem, to which we should add the preservation of the Jews through the centuries as a separate people without country, government, or religious center, scattered among the nations yet never absorbed — a standing sign of judgment. To read our text as a prophecy referring only to the days of Jesus on earth when he preached and taught in person, would be a grave mistake. The sweep of these words extends to the final day of vengeance itself. — One thing more should be noted. The imagery used by Isaiah in this prophecy, especially in our text, is largely derived from the distressful features which this prophet foretold as impending for wicked Israel in the coming Babylonian exile. While there is no question on this point, and Isaiah with all his wonderful vision always remains the Old Testament prophet that he is, it would be silly and ridiculous to conclude with modern unbelieving radicals that these prophecies have to do only with the return from the exile, and in fact with this exile not as foretold by revelation, but as described after the event in pretended prophecy by some pretender under the name "Isaiah," or just simply unknown. As Aug. Pieper puts it: to read all the great chapters, *Is. 2; 7; 9; 11; 12; 25; 26; 35; 40; 42; 49; 50; 53; 60*, as references to the exile and return is to have an immense mountain travail and bring forth — a mouse! It would mean to deny all prophecy and revelation, to brand Christ himself as an imposter, to cancel the entire New Testament, and, we add, to erase from the pages of history the almost 2000 years of the life of the New Testament Church. There is no place for argument here; there is only

the absolute parting of the ways. As an Old Testament prophet Isaiah used his Old Testament colors. The imagery given him for the exile and return, and in due time fulfilled to the very letter, he applied to the greater events to come, to be fulfilled in far greater fashion, as abundant events have already historically shown, and beyond the shadow of a doubt will yet show. To that exile imagery he added the pigments of Paradise and other Old Testament colors. To literalize it all, either with the radicals in the old exile, or with the fanaticists in a supposed millennium, is to trade truth and fact for self-made childish fiction.

1. **The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me;
because the LORD hath anointed me to
preach good tidings unto the meek;
he hath sent me to bind up the broken-
hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to *them that
are bound*;**
2. **The proclaim the acceptable year of the
LORD,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all that mourn;**
3. **To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,
to give unto them beauty for ashes,
the oil of joy for mourning,
the garment of praise for the spirit of
heaviness,
the planting of the LORD,
that he might be glorified.**

In prophetic fashion the future things here foretold are set forth as having already actually come. This prophecy concerning the still distant Messiah reads as if the Messiah stood before us and uttered

the words here put into his mouth. Thus in advance we are made to stand with Jesus where afterwards he stood beside the Jordan, Matth. 3, 16; and in the synagoge at Nazareth, Luke 4, 18. Moreover, Isaiah has already referred to what he here sets before us so fully, cf. 41, 1; 49, 8; 50, 4-5; etc. — But von Hofmann, to name only one of numerous modern commentators, objects. We are told, not the Messiah, but Isaiah is speaking here of himself. This is Isaiah's anointing, Isaiah's preaching to comfort the returned exiles from Babylon. The prophet is exalting his own mission, and doing it by speaking like "an evangelist of the dayspring from on high," and like "an apocalyptic writer who sketches what the New Testament apocalyptic writer will describe at length." These fine titles are to make the thing seem more plausible to us. Thus we are to agree that Jesus' own interpretation in Luke 4, 21 does not count. We are to overlook that in astounding fashion the prophet here thrusts himself and his office forward, and appropriates for himself what again and again (42, 1 and 6-7; 48, 16b; 54, 4; etc.) he has predicated of the Messiah. But we emphatically decline to pervert the sacred words in this way. The One who is dramatically represented as speaking here, by his very words attests himself as the Messiah. — We are in the presence of the Holy Trinity; all three persons are named here side by side: the Lord God = the first person; the One Anointed = the second person; the Spirit of the Lord God = the third person. This revelation of the three persons runs all through the Old Testament, despite the denials of foolish commentators and critics, so that when John the Baptist on the threshold of the New Testament also mentions the three persons all his Jewish hearers take it as a matter of course. — **The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me**, means that he with all his gifts and powers rests upon the Messiah for the perfect execution of

his Messianic work. He by whom every true Old Testament prophet, high priest, and king wrought, using the gifts he bestowed, came himself together with all his gifts upon Jesus for the supreme work he was to do. He is called the Spirit of 'Adonai Yahveh, of him who with his power rules as Lord supreme, and who with his covenant grace is the fountain of salvation. Our English uses "GOD" with capitals for Jehovah. — The Spirit is upon the Messiah, **because the LORD hath anointed me**, *ya'an* with the perfect always in the sense of "because." The verb "anoint," *mashach*, from which we have "Messiah," denotes the symbolic act of pouring oil upon the head of one chosen for a sacred office. In the case of the Messiah the symbol of the oil is replaced by the Holy Spirit himself descending and abiding upon Jesus. Note the emphatic *'othi*, in place of the far weaker suffix for "me," fittingly drawing attention to this great person. Our Confessions quote Is. 61, 1 to prove that "the entire fulness of the Spirit (as the fathers say) has been communicated by the personal union *to the flesh*, which is personally united with the Son of God." The result is that "according to the assumed human nature he knows and has ability with respect to all things"; and that "as man in deed and truth he has received through the personal union all knowledge and power." Jacobs, *Book of Concord*, 638, 74; Mueller, 691. Thus by the anointing was Jesus equipped in the highest manner for his work. — That work is summarized by the purpose infinitive with *l'*: **to preach good tidings unto the meek**. The verb *bisser*, "to smoothen," "to say what is pleasant," is identical with *εὐαγγελίζεσθαι* in the New Testament. But *'anavim* is "the wretched." The unbelieving exegetes, as Aug. Pieper points out, have shamefully abused this term, for instance in Num. 12, 3, to overthrow the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, translating it "the meek," i. e. those that subject them-

selves to Jehovah. Now indeed the wretched and miserable are often the meek and pious. But both 'anav and 'ani are from 'anah, "to be oppressed," "to suffer," and this fundamental meaning remains throughout. Here the expressions which follow show beyond question that we should translate "the wretched," those oppressed, as also the LXX have "the poor," see Luke 4, 18; and "the poor in spirit," Matth. 5, 3. "The poor in spirit are those who, whether rich or poor in temporal things, are conscious of their poverty in regard to that righteousness and true holiness with which man was endowed when God created him in his own image and which is required of him to fulfill his mission." Loy, *Sermon on the Mount*, 26. They are oppressed and made wretched by their sin and guilt coupled with the terrors of the law, Ps. 32, 4. For them the Messiah's glad tidings are intended. "The Gospel proclaims the forgiveness of sins, not to coarse and secure hearts, but to the bruised and penitent." *Book of Concord*, Jacobs, 590, 9. The entire prophetic ministry of the Messiah is thus summarily described, only we must note that what the Messiah proclaims he also himself brings. He is a prophet, and more than a prophet, a deliverer and savior as well. That is why he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, above all other prophets.

The anointing was an induction into office, and thus a sending. Therefore the parallel statement: **he hath sent me, etc.**, namely the Spirit of the Lord God. But now the object of the Messiah's mission is described with a wealth of imagery. Again there is an infinitive of purpose with *l*^e: **to bind up the broken-hearted**, as one bandages a broken limb. But the object here is the dative with *l*^e, and the injury appears as an inward hurt, hearts crushed, with no more spirit to rise, ready to despair.

“A broken heart, my God, my King,
 Is all the sacrifice I bring:
 The God of grace will ne'er despise
 A broken heart for sacrifice.”

These broken-hearted ones are identical with the wretched in the previous clause. — A second infinitive follows, with a new figure: **to proclaim liberty to the captives.** The picture is richer than our translation indicates, for *qara' d^eror* denotes the legal release proclaimed in the Jewish jubilee year, i. e. the 50th after seven successive Sabbath years, when automatically every bond-servant was set free and all property reverted to its original owners. Plainly, this is imagery not from the exile. Sin and its curse are the worst possible bondage, and the Messiah is represented as bestowing complete release by his proclamation. This is the striking picture of the absolution: My son, my daughter, thy sins are forgiven — depart in peace! In Luke 4, 18 the Greek word for “release” is especially precious, because it is the one regularly used for “forgiveness,” ἀφεσις, the dismissal of guilt and punishment. For the sinner there is no sweeter word in all the Bible. — A third infinitive completes this first circle: **and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.** Only *ph^eqach-qoach* refers to the eyes, and not to a prison, whence the Septuagint translation: “recovering of sight to the blind.” The critics think that the doubling of the Hebrew term is an error in transcription, the ancient scribe having written the same word twice; so they substitute the simple infinitive *ph^eqoach*. But Koenig points out that this doubling is intentional and regular, and denotes completeness; also that the simple infinitive *ph^eqoach* could not balance *d^eror* in the previous clause. If we read “the complete opening of the eyes” as it applies to men “bound,” we have the picture of captives in a dark cell where they cannot see,

brought out into the fullest sunlight. But the modified meaning of *ph^eqach-qoach* is "complete or utter happiness," and this fits still better as a gift to men utterly wretched in some sort of bondage. Sin always promises happiness, but when its guilt binds the soul, the last ray of happiness disappears, and blackest woe descends. The Messiah's proclamation restores in completest fashion the light of happiness to the soul bound in the darkness of guilt.

In v. 2 the *l^o* before *Yahveh*, and before *Eloheanu* indicates the genitive, and the terms to which they are attached are in the construct. These genitives modify "year" and "day" respectively: "the Lord's year of favor" (not: the year of the Lord's favor); "our God's day of vengeance" (not: the day of vengeance of our God). The adjective "acceptable," in **the acceptable year of our Lord**, is a free rendering. When the Messiah is said to **proclaim** this year, that signifies both his announcing and his ushering in that "year" by his bringing and bestowing the Lord's favor or grace. It is the same with **the day of vengeance of our God**. The name "Lord" matches the idea of grace; and the name "our God" matches the idea of vengeance. In the latter the possessive "our" conveys the thought that God exerts his power upon the wicked in our behalf — he has promised us that he would do so. Yet we should not think that the prophet separates "year" and "day," grace and vengeance, or views the two as successive. Even down to John the Baptist the two melt together, although the grace endures long, and the vengeance falls like a stroke. The acceptable year which the Messiah proclaimed and ushered in in due time we now know constitutes the entire New Testament era. So too we know fully now that at the end of this era the final judgment shall take place at the last day. Yet ever and again the day of vengeance flames forth even now in God's preliminary judgments upon in-

dividuals and nations. Remember, for instance, the destruction of Jerusalem. When Jesus preached in Nazareth he read Isaiah's words only as far as this vengeance clause, because he intended to preach only on the exhibition of grace which his hearers then witnessed.

The proclamation of the acceptable year and the day of vengeance named no persons. These are now added in the second clause of v. 2 and in v. 3. Of course the year of grace is full of comfort for those who repent and believe, but that is true also of the day of vengeance which settles accounts with the impenitent and unbelieving. Hostile, proud, arrogant now, they shall not always lord it over the humble believers. **To comfort all that mourn**, resembles Matth. 5, 4. The piel of *nacham* means "to let one breathe freely," and thus "to comfort." The load is removed, the dread is gone; satisfaction and assurance fill the heart. "All that mourn," besides adding "all," describes the wretched of v. 1 in a new way, namely from the feeling of their sin and guilt and the consequent lament.

Verse 3 elaborates what has thus been briefly touched. We now learn how wonderfully the Messiah comforts. **To appoint unto them** is strengthened by the apposition **to give unto them**. Where a definite object is mentioned as here, "beauty for ashes," *sum* = *aufsetzen*. And this is by way of a gift, so that we have the connotation of free grace. **Them that mourn in Zion** are really "Zion's mourners"; not, however, that they mourn over Zion's sad lot (Delitzsch), but over their own condition. This reference to Zion shows that these people are Israelites. — They shall receive **beauty for ashes**, or rather a beautiful headdress, like a turban, wreath, or diadem, in place of ashes. There is a lovely play of words between *ph^eer* and *'epher*, which the German imitates: *Schmuck fuer Schmutz*. To sit in ashes and to throw

ashes on the head is the sign of deepest mourning and grief. To crown the head with a wreath or diadem is the sign of highest joy. The description throughout reminds one of the prodigal's return, when his filthy tatters were replaced by festive garments. — In the next two statements the contrast is between symbols and feelings, where we perhaps would expect first a contrast between two symbols, and then one between two feelings. But the way the prophet has these contrasts makes both of them more striking. Besides, we should never overlook the fact that the Lord never gives us merely one feeling in place of another, but an adequate divine gift to justify and produce the new feeling. So he bestows **the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness**. Koenig would make "joy" an appositional genitive: the oil which consists in gladness. Then, however, the second should be like it: the garment which consists in praise — which is quite impossible. No, both "oil" and "garment" refer to the divine gifts which produce gladness and praise. These are objective genitives. In and with the divine pardon the sinner receives the anointing of the Spirit and is clothed with the garment of righteousness or salvation. Thus he is made glad and filled with songs of praise, where before under the weight of his sins he had only mourning and a spirit of heaviness and despair. — *Qora'* is 3rd pers. sing. pual (passive): "there is given a name" to them, namely by the Lord himself, and then also by his people. The connection, after the preceding infinitives, makes this too a purpose clause: **that they might be called trees of righteousness**. The word translated "trees" signifies terebinths, noted for their size, long life, and perennial freshness. The characterization "of righteousness" places the actuality beside the figure, and thus illumines all the previous statements. "Righteousness" denotes the divine approval. This is the imputed

righteousness, the gift of the Messiah, the Lord's favorable verdict for Christ's sake, as also the apposition shows: **the planting of the LORD**. We recall Ps. 1, 3. — **That he might be glorified** indicates the final purpose, as in 60, 21. For the entire work of grace here described as wrought through the great Servant of Jehovah displays the Lord's glory in the shining forth of his love, grace, and mercy.

4. **And they shall build the old wastes,
they shall raise up the former desolations,
and they shall repair the waste cities,
the desolations of many generations.**
5. **And strangers shall stand and feed your
flocks,
and the sons of the alien shall be your
plowmen and your vinedressers.**
6. **But ye shall be named the Priests of the
LORD:
men shall call you the Ministers of our God:
ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles,
and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.**

In the interpretation of this section a few vital points must be held fast, or we may lose our exegetical balance. First of all, verses 4-6 describe the era of the Messiah, just as verses 1-3 do. The Messiah himself here shows us a picture of the Christian Church and its beneficent spiritual work. Secondly, the imagery used in verses 4-6 is used in the same way as that in verses 1-3. In other words, if "captives," "oil," "garment," and "trees" stand for spiritual counterparts, then "wastes," "waste cities," "desolations," "feed your flocks," "your plowmen and your vinedressers" likewise stand for spiritual counterparts. Delitzsch is right, although he does not abide by his own principle: "Everything here is still sub-

ordinate to v. 1." In other words, all in verses 4-9 is the proclamation of the Messiah Jesus. Thirdly, Isaiah as an Old Testament prophet naturally and properly uses Old Testament imagery. The Spirit that inspired him found such imagery fully effective for his purpose. But that means that the *source* of the pictures thus used in no way limits or determines their *significance*. Some of these pictures may reflect the restoration after the exile, but that does not mean that this restoration is here meant. For combined with them are pictures and references not connected with the restoration after the exile at all. But while it ought to be accepted once for all that these verses describe the work and prosperity of the Christian Church, as the Messiah himself is made to foretell it, the question may be asked, whether this is the *spiritual* work and prosperity of the Christian Church, or her *outward* development and the *earthly* side of her prosperity. That question, too, should not be difficult to decide. Jesus never promised to his Church earthly prosperity. He promised only her extension among the nations, but to the end of time his kingdom on earth is to remain a kingdom marked by the cross. Up to the present day it has been the antichrist who has vied in earthly power and magnificence with the kingdoms of this world.

In v. 1-3 the Messiah describes *the spiritual renewal* he will effect in men's hearts *through the Gospel of his grace*; in v. 4-9 (our text uses only 4-6) *the spiritual renewal* he will effect in men's hearts *through the work of his Church*. We add that in v. 1-11 this twofold renewal is praised by one who has experienced it in himself (v. 10) and has witnessed it in the Church at large (v. 11).

The Messiah is still speaking, now telling us what those whom he has blessed spiritually shall do in helping to bless others. **The old wastes** are ruins of ancient times, specified more closely in **the waste**

cities. To these are added the **former desolations**, i. e. those of ancestral times, and the **desolations of many generations**, left desolate by all these generations. Some read all four expressions as referring to ruined cities and villages; but the "desolations" may equally well be read of dreary wastes never inhabited at all or even tilled and cultivated. These ruins and wastes the people blessed spiritually by the Messiah **shall build up, raise up** (*qum*, only the piel fut. = "raise up"), and **shall repair**, or renew. While the ruined towns and wastes of the exile period, and their restoration after the exile, may have been in the prophet's mind, this can have been only in part, for the modifiers "old" and "former" in the sense of ancient, and especially "of many generations," reach far back of the exile. Now the exegesis which here makes people *spiritually* renewed build up and restore *physically* ruined and *physically* desolate places, is on the very face of it preposterous and self-contradictory. Prosperous heathen nations have done that sort of thing right along without the slightest spiritual renewing. The same Messiah who through Isaiah gave us these prophecies has himself declared their fulfillment when just before his ascension he told his disciples: "But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost has come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1, 8. These ruins and desolations are the spiritual conditions among men. Jerusalem itself was like a waste city spiritually with its empty and arid formalism, its dreary work-righteousness, and its dead unbelief. Luke records at length how the apostles, themselves spiritually renewed, built up a magnificent congregation in this center of Judaism by means of the Gospel. This spiritual restoration spread through the land. Luke describes it all. St. Paul especially carried this spiritual building and

planting into the synagogues of the diaspora, and from these synagogues into the heathen populations which had been desolate spiritual wastes through all past generations. In accord with the Messiah's own command, Matth. 28, 19-20, this glorious work of turning spiritual wastes and desolations into "God's building" and "God's husbandry," 1 Cor. 3, 9, has gone on through the ages and is in full swing now.

The figures in v. 4 are amplified in v. 5. Here we see **flocks** on green pastures, **plowmen** cultivating broad fields, and **vinedressers** in rich vineyards. Again, it is preposterous to make the Messiah speak of *physical* agricultural prosperity among his *spiritually* renewed people. The thing becomes wildly false when the owners of these flocks, fields, vineyards are declared to be Jewish Christians who have under them as their servants the Gentiles to do the hard work. Is there even the shadow of such a thing in the New Testament? Or has any one seen a trace of it during these almost 2,000 years of the Messiah's reign? No; these are pictures of spiritual prosperity, of the very realities we now see in the Church. Paganism and all false religions create in men's hearts conditions that look exactly like an arid wilderness or like lands and hills overgrown with briars, brambles, and thorns. Just recall the hard trodden ground or "way side," the "stony places," and the "thorns" in the parable of the Sower, Matth. 13, 4 etc. What a different picture where the Gospel flourishes! — But who are these **strangers** who **shall feed your flocks, the sons of the alien** who are to be **your plowmen and your vinedressers**? When Aug. Pieper makes this mean that the Jews as a people even in the New Testament are to hold an exceptional position, and when he makes the physical work and the physical wealth of the Gentiles a grand asset of the Christian Church, we feel sorry to see this bit of old chiliastic literalism in exegesis clinging to a good

old Lutheran commentator whose heart is far from all chiliasm. The thing gets worse when Pieper comes to v. 6 and makes the Jewish people (converted of course) "the Priests of the Lord" and "the Ministers of our God," and then, feeling in his Lutheran heart that this sounds strange, permits the Gentile Christians, without the slightest warrant in the text and contrary to its very words, share in this universal Christian priesthood. With half an eye one sees that something is wrong in such exegesis; text and interpretation simply do not tally. It is true indeed, these possessives "your" flocks, "your" plowmen etc. refer to those who were once Jews, cf. "in Zion" in v. 3; and "strangers" and "the sons of the alien" undoubtedly refer to Gentile Christians. But who these persons really are we may learn more easily from v. 6.

But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God. The term for "ministers" is the participle piel construct from *sharath*, and the verb denotes the more refined service, which also is voluntary. The verb *ye'amer* is the fut. niph'al 3rd pers. sing. from *'amar*, lit.: "it shall be said of you," i. e. "men shall call you." Poor Delitzsch, chiliast though he is, finds himself, like the others, sadly at a loss here. He says, "this sounds as if restored Israel is to be related to the converted Gentiles as the clergy to the laity," yet he admits that this cannot be the prophet's meaning. He practically resigns the case when he says that he cannot conceive how converted Judaism in the position of liturgist among the nations can be made to accord with the New Testament spirit of liberty and abolition of all national differences. The author is in the same position, he, too, cannot conceive how the thing could be done. The whole New Testament cries out against it. St. Paul never made the converted Jews in any sense priests of the other Christians, nor did he select only from Jewish converts the pastors of the first

congregations. — The case is left just as desperate when “priests” here are read in the sense of “the royal priesthood,” 1 Pet. 2, 9; Rev. 1, 6; for this title the New Testament accords to all believers, without distinction of nation, sex even, or age. Once for all Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, Eph. 2, 14, making of both one in the Christian Church. All this ought to make it plain that in our text the Messiah is not speaking of the universal priesthood, for in this priesthood there are no differences at all, to say nothing of a difference like the one stated so plainly in our text. — **The Priests of the Lord** here meant are the Twelve Apostles. All of them were converted Jews, St. Paul included. In these apostles, by virtue of their great office, Israel has held and will forever hold an exceptional position in the Church. For it is still true that we “are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,” Eph. 2, 20. “Apostles and prophets” are one class, the Greek combines them under one article, so that “prophets” cannot mean those of the Old Testament. Their priestly service, being in the New Testament after the eternal sacrifice of the Messiah (Heb. 9, 11-12), consists not in expiatory bloody sacrifices, but in bringing to us the eternal sacrifice of Christ through the ministry of the Word. And this is the Inspired Word, written down once for all for the Church of all ages. This priestly ministry of the apostles continues in our day, just as it has continued from the start. The Messiah himself, in an immediate manner, called the apostles to this wonderful office and gave them the great equipment that was necessary. — The second designation helps to illumine the first, as this is always the case with such additions: men **shall call you the Ministers of our God**. Read for instance St. Paul: “Unto me . . . is this grace given that I should

preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Eph. 3, 8; 1 Tim. 2, 7; etc. This is the highest human ministry possible in the Church, conferring all Christ's spiritual benefits to the Church of all ages. — And now look back at those **strangers** who shall stand and feed those flocks. The **flocks** are the congregations gathered by the Inspired Word of the apostles all through the ages of the Church; therefore the significant possessive "your flocks." They are Israel's through the apostles. These "strangers" **shall stand and feed** them (note the significant "stand"), as duly appointed shepherds, or pastors. Read Eph. 4, 11: "And he gave some . . . pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints," etc. — Yet they are **the sons of the alien**, men of Gentile extraction. That is exactly what our preachers and pastors are to-day. A second figure calls them **your plowmen**. Read 1 Cor. 3, 9: "Ye are God's husbandry," margin "tillage," "ye," the congregations, plowed, planted, tilled and tended by these sons of the alien, who in the Christian ministry carry forward the work of the Inspired Word left by the apostles, so that again the possessive "your" plowmen is justified. — Then the third figure: **your vinedressers**. How well-known is the picture of the Church as a vineyard! Math. 21, 41: "and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their season." Here are three pictures of the work of the Christian ministry: we tend the Lord's flocks, till his fields, dress his vines. We do it by means of the Word given us through the apostles. We are not of Jewish but of Gentile blood, yet have been brought nigh by that same Israel of Zion of old. Thus the Messiah who spoke through Isaiah in prophecy explains that prophecy to us by the words he afterward spoke by his own mouth and through the men moved by his Spirit.

Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentile, and in their glory ye shall boast yourselves; *thithyamaru*, from *yamar*, or with the substitution of aleph for yod 'amar, to lift oneself up, or make oneself great = boast oneself: in *ihrer Herrlichkeit einherstolzieren*. Here again the commentators think only of physical and earthly wealth and glory. They would persuade us that in the New Testament era the Gentile Christians will bring all this into the Church, and so the Jewish Christians will partake of it and boast of it. But the entire difference between Jewish and Gentile Christians was soon obliterated in the Church, and has entirely disappeared down to the present day. All through this prophetic speech of the Messiah the figurative terms have expressed spiritual realities. It cannot be otherwise now. "The riches of the Gentiles" are not their money, and "their glory" is not their earthly fame. The Church never has and never will possess the bulk of Gentile wealth and glory; as represented in men, institutions, and achievements it will remain secular, not sacred. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Cor. 1, 26-29. Read also Matth. 19, 23-24; James 5, 1 etc.; 1 Tim. 6, 9-10. We refuse to pass by these statements just because some commentator cannot find his way through a prophetic passage. We refuse to accept a picture of the New Testament Church which does not tally with the facts. Moreover, much of the wealth in Rome and other churches has never become the wealth of the Church at all. — **The riches of the Gentiles,**

and their glory, of which the Messiah here speaks, is spiritual: "rich in faith," James 2, 5; "rich toward God," Luke 12, 21; "rich in good works," 1 Tim. 6, 18: "gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich," Rev. 3, 18; "glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile," Rom. 2, 10; "we glory in tribulation also," Rom. 5, 3; 1 Pet. 2, 20. A direct interpretation of our passage is found in St. Paul's word to the Thessalonians: "Ye are our glory and joy," 1 Thess. 2, 20. The apostles, and through them all the true sons of Zion of old, surely have a right to boast of every bit of spiritual wealth and glory in the Christian Church, for it all came through their ministration. All our knowledge, faith, love, virtues, works, offerings, praises, tribulations, crosses, and whatever there is of martyrdom, all this true wealth and glory of the Church, while it is indeed the Messiah's work, is nevertheless the outcome of the precious Word transmitted to us from Zion of old through the apostles. Silver and gold we may have none, or comparatively little; what we do have is far richer and more glorious.

SUGGESTIONS

The Epiphany festival dealt with the glory of the Church; the next Sunday with our love for the Church; and this Sunday deals with the Lord of the Church. That forms a grand sequence. However, we may also pair the first two texts: the attractive power of the Church—answering to that, our love for the Church. Then the next two texts, ours and the one following, may likewise be paired: the saving power of the Church—faith (Naaman).—Our entire text presents the Messiah foretelling his saving work. We may thus make him the central figure, subordinating the Church. Since, however, the Messiah appears in the Church and then works through the Church, we may place the Church in the center and combine the Messiah with the Church, and thus take the subject of the text to be: *The Blessings of Salvation Dispensed by the Messiah*

in and Through His Church. This, in fact, may already be used as a theme, allowing us to list and describe these blessings in the division and elaboration. — There are two parts in the text, namely the two paragraphs of which it is composed. We may use them as sermon parts and combine them under a theme. This would be a simple analytical sermon. In working it out the prophecies constituting the text should be presented in their actual New Testament fulfillment. It is also best to transplant ourselves in thought to the days when the Messiah was on earth and preached as he did at Nazareth, and then as he commissioned his disciples just before his ascension. We thus arrive at something like the following:

The Savior Himself Describes the Salvation He Brings.

I. It is spiritual deliverance.

- 1) By means of his Gospel he frees from sin and guilt.
- 2) By means of his Gospel he bestows righteousness and joy.

II. It is spiritual restoration.

- 1) He builds and plants his Church in the ruined and desolated places of the world.
- 2) Through the office of the apostles and the work of the ministry.

A threefold analytical division results when first of all the Messiah himself is described, then his deliverance of each sinful soul, and then his saving work through the Church.

The Lord's Own Story of Salvation.

- I. It deals with himself.*
- II. With your soul and mine.*
- III. With his Church in all the world.*

The contents of the text pivot on the Word or Gospel. In v. 1 we have Christ himself preaching good tidings; and in v. 6 we have the apostles as Priests and Ministers. Add v 5 with its shepherds, plowmen, and vinedressers. And then the other verses with the effects of the Gospel.

The Messiah's Great Work of Bringing Us Salvation.

- I. *He comes himself.*
- II. *He preaches the Gospel.*
- III. *He sends his apostles.*
- IV. *He establishes the Church.*
- V. *He adds preachers and pastors.*
- VI. *He saves immortal souls.*

Here we have forsaken the order of subjects and thoughts in the text, and built up our own order to carry out the governing idea in the theme which the text has suggested. The result is a synthetical arrangement, or rather mainly synthetical. — There are strong contrasts in the text: captives — liberation; broken hearts — binding up; Mourners — comfort, etc. Again: wastes — a place built up; desolations — a place cultivated. Thus on the one hand the need of men in its full reality, and on the other the all-sufficient relief for this need. This alone would make a strong sermon, just presenting the two by cutting the text vertically. But the text adds more: the divine Helper, our anointed Savior; the divine means for helping, the Gospel or glad tidings; and even the agencies for bestowing the help, namely the apostolate, the church and its ministry. The material is complete, and certainly rich in every way. We here see 1) what really has to be done for men; 2) who alone is able to do it; 3) and how he actually does it.

The Work of Salvation in its Overwhelming Greatness.*I. Salvation — think what the task means!*

- 1) To take souls crushed, captive, etc., and to make them whole, free, etc.
- 2) To replace ashes with beauty, etc.
- 3) To turn wastes and desolations into lively places, rich pastures, fields, and vineyards.
- 4) To proclaim an entire new era (the acceptable year of the Lord), and to wreak vengeance upon the wicked.

II. Salvation — think of the Savior this requires!

- 1) The Incarnate Son of God.
- 2) This Son anointed to be the Messiah and Christ.
- 3) This Christ to preface and bestow righteousness and a new life (v. 3 b).

III. Salvation—think what agencies must be put to work!

- 1) The Gospel of the good tidings, God's own word full of power and grace.
- 2) The Church as the bearer of the Gospel, and its ministry constantly to apply this Gospel.

Conclusion: Thank God that this tremendous work has been inaugurated, is in full swing to-day, and that personally this wondrous salvation is ours and we have our share in bringing it to others.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

2 Kings 5, 1-19

Like the old gospel lesson for this Sunday, with its leper and its centurion, this is evidently a text on *faith*, only here the leper and the military man are one and the same person. We must add that faith rests, and must rest, on *the Word*, for these two are correlatives: the Word is for faith, and can be received in no other way; and faith rests on the Word, and can have no other foundation. Naaman does indeed begin by believing the Word, but at the vital moment almost turns from it, yet is persuaded after all to trust it. — Here the text might well end, for its unity is complete. One may well question whether verses 17-19 should be added, since they raise a question without furnishing the necessary answer, a question that looks like an appendix to the real subject of the text. It is the author's judgment that the preacher may well omit this addendum. — The story of Naaman in our chapter is a separate and distinct episode in the life of Elisha. The question of just where it belongs chronologically need not be discussed by the preacher; most of the best commentators pass it by.

1. Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper.

Naaman signifies "loveliness." As *sar-tsaba'*, captain of the host, he was commander-in-chief of the king's armies, which shows his very high rank

and power. This was King Benhadad II, contemporary of the Israelitish kings Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram, 916-881 B. C. The Hebrew *'Aram* here is Syria, with its capital Damascus, where Naaman resided with the king. — He was **a great man with his master**, lit. for the countenance of his master, **and honorable**, *nesu' phanim*, the expression for court favorite. *Nasa' phanim* means to lift up one's own countenance; the pass. part *qal*, always used as a noun: one whose countenance has been lifted up. It was the oriental fashion to bow the head to the ground before the king and a mark of royal favor to be raised up; and to be designated as such a man meant "honorable," a favorite. Naaman, high in office, was likewise esteemed and honored by the king. — The reason is added: **because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria**. The man who drew his bow at a venture and mortally wounded Ahab in the battle at Ramoth-gilead, 1 Kgs. 22, 34, is called the "young nobleman Amanus," whom Jewish tradition identified with Naaman. That act was both directed by the Lord's providence and gave deliverance to Syria, i. e. victory. It tallies with our text, and we have no other explanation of any signal service rendered by Naaman to his king and country. Besides his office and his honor, here we have his merit. — **He was also a mighty man of valor, a leper**, i. e. powerful, or a hero, as to efficiency, but sad to say — a leper. The part. qual *m^etsora'*, from *tsara'*, has the verb and not the adjective idea: "having become leprous." A strong contrast is intended: a powerful, hero-like warrior (and that meant hand-to-hand fighting), he, sad to say, had become a leper. The intention is not, as some think, to convey the idea that in Syria lepers were not segregated, for leprosy soon made a man unfit, and the danger of contagion made men naturally shun him. Naaman's leprosy seems just to have begun; it was the so-called white

leprosy, v. 27, running its course in about 20 years, while the tubercular killed in about 10. Office, honor, merit, and — this affliction. Just these few pen-strokes, and the man stands fully revealed before us.

2. And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. 3. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria for he would recover him of his leprosy. 4. And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.

'Aram is a collective singular, hence followed by plurals. Syria, i. e. **the Syrians**, had gone out as raiders, *g'dudim*, small bands to pillage here and there in the borders of Israel. On one of these raids a detachment **had brought away captive, yishbu (shabah), a little maid.** It all seemed, and, in fact, was quite a matter of course; nobody gave it a second thought, yet the Lord's hand was in it for high purposes of his own. —

The scene is now set: the king — the general-in-chief — the wife — the personal servant. Now the action begins; and we might guess it: in an unexpected way, for the Lord loves means that look insignificant to us. By making one brief remark, the entire train of events in this chapter is set in motion. The maid said to her mistress: **Would God etc.,** lit.: "Oh, if only!" an earnest wish born of sympathy. Was her poor mistress crying over the unexpected calamity, over the inevitable and terrible prospect? The maid's words sound that way. This is her wish: that **my Lord (were) with the prophet that (is) in Samaria!** *liphne* in the sense of "before him," in his presence. The girl knew all about Elisha and the Lord's power manifested in the miracles he wrought. So she states as the reason for her wish: **for** (really:

then) he would recover him from his leprosy, lit.: "receive him from his leprosy," i. e. by receiving him rid him of the disease. Since a leper could not be received, actually receiving Naaman meant: no more leprosy. Not that the maid tried to tell *how* the prophet would cure the disease; she asserted only *that* he would. In Samaria, she means to say, there is a prophet who can remove leprosy in a miraculous way; but she puts this in the form of a personal expression: I know he would. — Only the essential points in the story are recorded. Naaman's wife must at once have told her husband. Despairing of any possible help from medicine or through his own gods, Naaman must have believed the girl's words. He himself may have questioned her. At all events he acts at once. Not some unnamed person, as our translation intimates, but Naaman himself **told his lord**, the king, what the maid had said, and who she was. And with equal promptness the king acts.

5. And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand *pieces* of gold, and ten changes of raiment. 6. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have *therewith* sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. 7. And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had rent the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, *Am* I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

At once the king says: "Up, come, I will send a letter" etc. The thing is done; Naaman is on his way. Certainly quick action! And it is done in royal fashion too, for Naaman bears as gifts to the king

of Israel about \$18,000 in silver; \$36,000 in gold (6,000 shekels, or 2 talents); and 10 choice and expensive robes. It is Benhadad's sense of propriety that he addresses Jehoram, the king of Israel, and not Elisha directly. To have ignored the king, and gone directly to the prophet, would have been a slight. On almost any friendly mission, and certainly on one asking a favor, an oriental king would send appropriate gifts, not as pay, but as the only proper way of proffering a request. These gifts, too, were gauged, not so much by the value of the favor, as by the dignity and greatness of the king asking the favor. Benhadad would have lowered and demeaned himself in his own eyes, and in those of his own court, if he had sent no gifts or cheap ones. Commentators assume that Benhadad imagined Jehoram could command the prophet's services at will, as **heathen kings** did with their soothsayers; also that Benhadad thought there would be no question, if he acted as he did with due propriety, about his securing the favor he now asked. We decline to accept these assumptions. Benhadad, trying to act properly as he did, could not in his request intimate that perhaps Jehoram would not be able to comply. So in due form Naaman arrives at the court of Jehoram.

His arrival causes consternation. The letter is presented, **saying**, lit.: "with this statement" in it, namely the one now quoted and containing the chief point. There was, of course, the proper polite address, and likely also a fitting preamble. Then the request, but with marked deference, and in no sense as a command to a vassal king: "And now when this letter is come unto thee" etc. The words: **that thou mayest recover**, lit.: "and thou will recover," put the request in the form of an expectation. The credit for the favor he asks Benhadad thus is ready to accord to Jehoram, who by using his kindly influence with Elisha would secure what Benhadad desired. —

One wonders what made Jehoram think and act as is now reported. The two had indeed been on unfriendly terms, as witness the raids in which the little maid had been carried off. Was it secret fear on Jehoram's part? With duplicity in his own heart, did he suspect the same thing in Benhadad, and thus fail to recognize the genuineness of his request? Or was it just blindness and pure inability to size up the true situation? When he **had read the letter**, lit. "had announced it," i. e. had it read aloud, he **rent his clothes**, the Jewish sign of great excitement or sudden great grief. — His exclamation accords with his act: **Am I God, to kill and to make alive, etc.** Jehoram acts as if Benhadad had asked *him* to perform this miracle, and as if he had never heard of Elisha. Spoken with reference to leprosy "to kill and to make alive" both imply divine power, namely by a word to remove the living death, or, having the power to remove, to refuse and thus to kill. — With *ki* Jehoram introduces the reason for his excited exclamation: **that this man (*zeh*) doth send unto me to recover a man (*'ish*) of his leprosy?** — With his premises awry, the conclusion could be no better. Here *ki*, **wherefore**, after a statement that must be negated, introduces and affirms the opposite positive idea; as if to say: no, this cannot be; but this is how it is. The particle *'ak* is for assurance; and *na'* either asks consent or draws favorable attention, here translated: "I pray you." Thus the court is to **consider and see**, and thus convince itself. Can't you see? you certainly must, Jehoram says, that this is nothing but a trick by which Benhadad, who has disturbed our borders right along, is trying to pick a quarrel with me? ~~That~~ the Lord has his hand in Benhadad's act, that the Lord's honor was at stake, and that at all events the one thing to do was to consult with Elisha and take counsel from him, these thoughts never crossed Jehoram's mind.

8. And it was *so*, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. 9. So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. 10. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

Elisha takes the case completely out of the king's hands. What a sorry figure the king cuts, excited about himself, where there was no reason for excitement, and blankly indifferent to God's honor, where there was every reason to consider it! What a noble figure stands revealed in the prophet, whose one concern is God's honor, and whose every act promotes and maintains that honor. Indeed, he was **the man of God** in character as well as in office. The report that quickly reached Elisha centered in the king's act of rending his clothes. If that had been the final answer to Naaman's request, both he and his master would have had to conclude that Jehovah after all was no greater than their god Rimmon. That is why Elisha's rebuke singles out this public confession of the king's unbelief and helplessness: **Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes?** in the sense of: Why such a false answer to Benhadad? — Elisha will make the true answer: **He shall know that there is a prophet in Israel**, which means, not a glorification of Elisha, as all that he now does testifies, but a glorification of the Lord God whose power and grace use the prophet as their humble human instrument. Therefore the peremptory order: **Let him come now to me.** The *na'*, as in v. 7, combined with *yabo'*, makes this order livelier and thus more emphatic; and *yesh* sig-

nifies: "there exists." This ends the story as far as Jehoram is concerned. We must write "exit" behind his name. — Naaman, the great general of Benhadad arrives in all his pride and glory before the humble door of Elisha's house. The picture is graphic: **with his horses and with his chariot**, and the escort of servants and military guards that accompanied him. The prophet was not outside to receive this dignitary; nor did he hasten out when the distinguished company arrived. He remained invisible. This man Naaman, and all who are with him, is to get far more than his king requested for him; he is to get a real and true impression of Jehovah-Elohim. To begin with this peculiar reception is to teach by an actual experience that all human greatness counts as nothing in the true God's sight. Naaman is not even granted the opportunity to prefer his king's request in his behalf. Did he sit there in his gleaming chariot looking at the house and the doorway with a puzzled frown on his face? Did a feeling of irritation begin to darken his eyes? Did he begin to think that perhaps this prophet would turn out just as helpless as the king of Israel; that perhaps he was in that house, afraid to come out, rending his clothes too like the other had done? — Well, the door finally does open, but no prophet appears, only **a messenger**, who without any ceremonies at all walks up to the great man's chariot and issues this order and promise: **Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.** If there was questioning astonishment at the lack of reception before, there was stunning astonishment at this short and decisive dismissal by a mere messenger. The prophet's order is more peremptory and impressive than our translation indicates. It starts with an absolute infinitive, with the force of a sharp command: To go! in the sense of: You are to go! or *eundum est*. The perfects with the

consecutive *vav*: “you will bathe in Jordan seven times, and your flesh will come back to you!” derive a similar effect from the preceding infinitive. And then another sharp imperative: “and be clean!” Yes, it was stunning in its form and in its effect. We may say, it took Naaman’s breath away. The messenger turned on his heel and went in where he had come out. Here was more of the impression Naaman was to receive and take away: God bestows his grace and gifts in his own way. It is all wrapped up in a simple Word; that Word strikes the heart to kindle the spark of faith — faith in nothing but that Word. Despise that Word, throw it aside as worthless, and, like the poor-looking purse with the precious gold coins hidden inside, you lose all the grace and gifts. Naaman came mighty near doing this foolish thing. Take the Word, just that Word without a thing else, even though spoken only by a little insignificant maid or by a very ordinary-looking messenger, believe it, trust it by the power that emanates from it, and that means actual trust so that you will act on that Word: and lo, all the grace and blessing in that Word are suddenly yours. The experience Naaman was put through is typical for all of us as believers; and a good many who say they believe balk down in the bottom of their hearts after all, hesitate in their secret thoughts, demand more than the Word in spite of their pretensions, and so perhaps lose the grace after all. Naaman was up before this simple alternative: there was the Word and promise thrown into his heart by that messenger — would he let it grip and hold him in faith; or would he resist it in unbelief? — Leprosy eats into the flesh, kills the tissues, produces ugly running sores. To heal it at any stage the parts attacked, whatever the stage, must grow new sound flesh.

11. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD

his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. 12. *Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.* 13. *And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?* 14. *Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.*

Naaman furnishes us a fine case of what our old dogmaticians call natural resistance. It is so fine because this man displays it all outwardly and allows us to see it, and the sacred narrative has preserved for us all the chief features of his resistance. We ought not to think that this is wilful resistance just because the man acts so passionately and talks so violently. Some natures are demonstrative, and here we have one. Wilful resistance, either quietly or violently, cuts the heart off in a definite and decisive way from the Word that tries to draw it to faith. Naaman's resistance yielded when his servants finally reasoned with him. — In Naaman's case we see also the reasoning of the natural heart. He is quite typical in this respect. In endless variation men have thought and talked in just this fashion about the Word and the Lord's way of grace. Their reasoning always seems so cogent and convincing, till the little argument is pricked by a little real biblical sense. Some men stick to their foolish reasoning much longer than Naaman, perhaps refusing true sense altogether. Naaman allowed himself to be corrected in time to gain the promised blessing.

On receiving the prophet's word Naaman went straight up in the air. The verb *qatzaph* means "to

burst out," and thus to be **wroth**. He vents his anger by leaving immediately, and then by relieving his mind. The exclamation **behold** indicates his feeling. — His thoughts, as he tells them quite openly, are interesting. This was his idea: **I thought** lit.: said to myself), **he will surely come out**, using the piel of *yatza'*, with the absolute infinitive added for intensification. And then: he will **stand** with an important air as about to perform a miracle. — And now he describes that deed as he had imagined it: **and call on the name of the LORD his God**, like the heathen sorcerers with their charms; **and strike** (lit. swing, *heniph*, hiphil from *nuph*) **his hand over the place, and recover the leper**. And now absolutely nothing of the kind had happened. Instead of signs and demonstrations he got nothing but the Word; and that Word not even from Elisha's lips, but uttered by a common servant. That was all. Yet we must note that this Word with its promise aimed to call forth faith, could be received only by faith, and would of course yield its blessing only to faith. That is the nature of the Word. Naaman, having expected something entirely different from the Word that called for faith from him, started to cast that Word aside in unbelief. He was disappointed in not getting what he expected. — But also what he got disappointed him. The very idea of washing in a muddy river like the Jordan! **Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?** The Abana, now Barada, rises in the Antilibanon, and divides into three streams, one flowing through Damascus, the other two at the sides of the city. The Pharpar probably flows south of Damascus. As mountain streams both have clear water, furnish drink for numerous towns and villages, make Damascus a delightful garden spot and spread rich verdure through an otherwise arid land. None of the streams in Israel compare with them. They

are either dry beds in summer, or in the case of the Jordan very muddy, so that no cities line their banks. — With the streams of Damascus so superior also in cleanness, **may I not wash in them, and be clean?** It is the reasoning of the blind natural mind, which forgets the Word. How often has it been applied to the water of Baptism! Men will not see that it is not the water at all, but the power of the Word in and with the water. **So he turned and went away in a rage, Zornesglut.**

But this man was certainly blessed in the servants he had, first in the little Jewish maid, and now in those of his retinue. Several of them must have consulted with each other without delay. They come to their master, one acting as spokesman, the rest present to support this plea. The address *'abi, my father*, Koenig says, may mean simply: "I pray thee." The "if" in the translation is because the order of the words indicates a condition: ***if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?*** The question implies a self-evident answer in the affirmative. Why would Naaman have done some "great thing," *dabar gadol*, if it had been required? Simply because it would have accorded more with his own expectation. — But now this implied answer is made the premise for a second question, one equivalent to a conclusion: **how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?** *'Aph ki* = "also . . . that," or: "is it *also* the case *that?*" (here as a question). How simple and sane this deduction! Just because the thing asked was far simpler and easier than expected, Naaman should not have been less, but rather more, ready to do it. But the real correctness of this servant's word is not in his using a truer logic than that of Naaman. It is not logic that reaches and bends the will and persuades the heart. Logic often only irritates and calls forth counter-logic. This servant's word is so strong be-

cause it properly presents the prophet's word, the command: Wash! and the promise: Be clean! Naaman's logic led him away from that divine Word; and that meant unbelief. The servant's logic (if we may call it that) led Naaman right to the divine Word the prophet had given him; and that meant faith. The former, for all its apparent sound reasoning, was utterly foolish. The latter, for all that any one might have reasoned against it, was the height of wisdom. For in all matters of divine grace, promise, and Gospel, reasoning and logic as such are nothing. Acceptance, trust, or as we usually call it, faith is the thing. And the moment that is seen even the sane and sensible mind finds it logically correct.

The story is told with great brevity, hence the next thing reported is simply the actual compliance of Naaman. Naaman went, **and dipped himself seven times in Jordan**. In the original command, as also in the servant's word, we have *rachats*, "to wash"; now we have *tabal*, "to bathe by dipping." But note the significant addition: **according to the saying of the man of God**. That was the vital thing. By his act he accepted the Word, and dropped everything else. Reason or non-reason was pushed aside, the Word alone was accepted. And he who accepts that always has what it says and contains: **and his flesh came again**, instantly, not by a slow process of natural healing, but **like unto the flesh of a little child**, or lad, so that its newness could be seen; **and he was clean**. Faith had its reward of grace. The miracle was wrought. — The text might end here and lose nothing as a text; for in preaching one would be entirely free to add from the context Naaman's faith in Jehovah as the true God. The question thrust in by v. 18 would thus be eliminated, which certainly seems preferable. To raise and answer this question in the sermon might easily disturb the central thought of the text, which is the Word and unquestioning faith in that Word.

15. And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that *there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.*

16. But he said, *As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused.*

17. And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD.

18. In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, *that* when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.

19. And he said unto him, Go in peace.

In interpreting this section let us remember for one thing that we are in the Old Testament, not in the New; and for another that Naaman had only a beginner's faith and knowledge, not that of a full-grown child of God. In Luke 4, 27 Jesus tells the unbelieving people of his home town that while there were many lepers in Israel in Elisha's days, only the heathen Naaman was healed, and thus by implication praises this Gentile's faith. But the tendency of the preacher to present Naaman and his faith as a complete model for his hearers, must nevertheless be checked. He is a model only in that he *had* faith at last, not in his limitations, and not in his weaknesses.—He returns, not alone or in secret, but with **all his company**. The act is described: **he came and stood before him**, i. e. the prophet. The verb "stand," *'amad*, is the same as in v. 11, where Elisha is expected

to "stand" and work the healing; and it has the same implication of standing with all due dignity and importance. We see that now Elisha received him and allowed him to assume his important air before his company as witnesses. He is indeed doing a mighty important thing, namely making a public confession of his new-born faith. — That confession is couched in these words: **Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.** The *na'* appended to *hinneh* is to help draw favorable attention; and *ki 'im* after a negative has the idea "except," or the adversative notion "on the contrary," German *sondern*. This confession has been misunderstood, as if Naaman meant that *'Elohim* was only in Israel, not in the earth everywhere, and that outside of Israel there was no god at all. But there is no reason to press the words in this way. Naaman confesses the nullity of all heathen gods, and the verity of the one true God, who is worshipped in Israel. And this is a good confession. Faith must always confess, and that publicly too. Naaman's confession stands to his credit. — To it he adds a request to leave a gift, *berakah*, **blessing**. He has been blamed for this, but certainly without reason. On other occasions Elisha did allow gifts to be made. Naaman is really grateful, and what more natural way than this is there for him to show it? — But Elisha is compelled in the name of Jehovah to decline any gift: **As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none.** *Hay* in adjurations = "by the life"; and "stand" is the same verb as above, here with the idea of important official capacity, i. e. to receive at any time the Lord's revelations. "I will receive none" is lit.: "whether (*'im*) I will receive," and we must supply: try it; or: see! meaning that most certainly he will not. Also a second offer **he refused**. To accept any gift from Naaman would have minimized the effect of the gift God (not Elisha) had conferred upon him. As he

had to be taught to be content with absolutely nothing but *the Word*, so now he had to be taught that the Word had brought him nothing but *pure grace*. He who had no claim upon God, not even the claim of an Israelite as one of God's people, he had received without any merit or worthiness on his part, a priceless and miraculous gift from the God of infinite power and grace. When Gehazi afterwards interfered to spoil this impression he rightly received the severest punishment. The application for us here is not that we shall not show our gratitude to God by joyful and plentiful gifts when we receive his grace and gifts; but that no gift of ours dare ever leave the secret impression in our hearts as though we can in any way pay God, or can in any way by our gifts establish future claims upon God.

Naaman's request for "the burden of a mule-span of earth" has been twisted to mean that Israel's God ruled only in the land of Israel, and by this earth a bit of the land of Israel was to be established in far-off Damascus. But Peter Martyr already has the true explanation: *hoc signo suam contestatur fidem erga deum Israelis, et eâ terrâ, tanquam symbolo, voluit ejus admoneri*. By erecting an altar with this earth Naaman intended to place in his heathen homeland a sign and monument of the true God. By his request to Elisha he wanted to secure his consent to the plan. On earth as material for an altar see Ex. 20, 24. So this request is an evidence and fruit of faith, not a fault, or faulty in part, but entirely commendable. — Naaman states the reason for his request, namely that henceforth he will execute, '*asah, burnt offering and sacrifice* (of which the blood and fat were offered to God, and the flesh eaten by the worshipper and priest) only to Jehova and to no other gods. It was thus that he needed an altar, and he himself would act as priest. As the request so the reason for it is good. Thenius reports from Ben-

jamin of Tudela the erection of a synagogue in Nahardea in Persia from earth and stone brought from Jerusalem by Jews of the diaspora, evidently with thoughts like those of Naaman. With Israel separated from Judah and Jerusalem and the worship of Jehovah sadly declining in Israel, the request of Naaman is the more justified.

But now comes the addition which presents difficulties hard to solve satisfactorily. Naaman asks to be pardoned when officially he accompanies his master the king in going to worship in the temple of the idol-god **Rimmon**. In an open and honest way he describes what this involves: **and he** (the king) **leaneth on my hand** (see 7, 2 and 17), **and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon**. It is especially the latter, which Naaman repeats: **when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon**, for this prostration would appear as an act of worship rendered to an idol. And so he asks: **the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing**. And Elisha has only this answer: **Go in peace!** — Keil thinks Elisha neither approved nor disapproved, since Naaman had not asked him, but had asked Jehovah himself for pardon. Hengstenberg says, Elisha left Naaman to the Lord's guidance, and carefully avoided by a single word to approve of his weakness. Roos tells us that Naaman should have shunned the heathen temple no matter what the cost; but Elisha did not force Naaman beyond the measure of his faith. Von Gerlach: Elisha dismissed him "without entering into the special questions involved." Lange thinks that Naaman shows a tender conscience, a thing which a weak and wavering faith could not have had. Older exegetes conclude that Elisha approved, and therefore consented to have the Elector John the Constant accompany Emperor Charles V to mass, carrying the sword before him in official capacity. They distinguished between voluntary bowing in actual personal worship, and com-

pulsory bowing in the official service of the king. In 1848 a heated controversy occurred regarding the Protestant soldiers in Bavaria who were forced to bow their knees before the Catholic monstern. The matter was patched up by allowing them to offer only military salute. Daeschel arrives at the solution that the conflict of duties in Naaman's case solved itself in that Benhadad was soon taken sick and murdered, 8, 7-15, and Naaman ceased to hold his position as the head of the army. — No true believer can take part outwardly in idol worship because of some secular official position, or for any other reason, and expect God to condone the act. That ought to be universally admitted. The casuistry which would admit such participation as merely outward is unethical and Jesuitic. The reason why Elisha did not say as much to Naaman is not stated, and we are left to surmise. The best is that Elisha had no revelation from God for Naaman on the question at issue, or that the approaching fate of Benhadad was known to Elisha and cancelled the contemplated difficulty by God's own providential act. Note the presence of Elisha in Damascus when the tragedy came for Benhadad and the devastation of Israel through Hazael impended.

SUGGESTIONS

The subject of our text, *Faith in the Word*, is presented in the story of Naaman and his cure from leprosy. We may retell the story in the sermon dividing it into natural chapters.

The Story of Naaman's Faith.

- I. *How he is compelled to seek the prophet.*
- II. *How the prophet gives him nothing but the Word.*
- III. *How the Word finally brings him to faith.*
- IV. *How faith proves his highest blessing.*

In each part the application intended must be added to the story part. A treatment like this should contain careful and interesting narration, each part of it, however, kept focussed upon the point intended to be applied. — Instead of drawing the formulation from the text, it may be drawn from the main features of the application.

Naaman, a Story of Faith and the Word.

- I. *In Naaman we see how God would lead us to his Word.*
- II. *In Naaman we see how our reason would balk at the Word.*
- III. *In Naaman we see how blessed is faith in the Word.*
- IV. *In Naaman we see how faith should abide by the Word.*

Leaving the story idea one may analyze the inner contents of the account and so build an interesting sermon. Shakespeare said that God shapes our ends, roughhew them as we will. There is a providence that runs through what is here told us.

God's Gracious Providence in Naaman's Life.

- I. *The purpose this providence set for itself.*
- II. *The means this providence used.*
- III. *The obstacles this providence overcame.*
- IV. *The goal this providence reached.*

This arrangement of the matter follows a logical order demanded by the idea of divine providence in the theme, and thus uses a different order than that of the text narrative. — Much is lost in this and similar texts when the preacher begins to generalize and thus wipes out the individual and concrete features of the story. The color is lost from the outline, forced down into the elaboration, and perhaps sacrificed even there. Take A. Pfeiffer's outline: *The School of the Cross*. It teaches 1) Humility (take my yoke upon you); 2) Gentleness (learn of me); 3) Patience (and ye shall find rest for your souls). Not a single reference to Naaman and his experience is left. A New Testament text is superimposed, blotting out the real text. And the chief point of the text, faith and the Word, is dropped entirely. Why print an outline like that in a book? It is worse than valueless. — Here is another from Koegel:

God's is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory. 1) His is the kingdom; for him there is neither accident nor fate. 2) His is the power; he humbles the lofty and blesses the lowly. 3) His is the glory; in the righteousness which rewards, and in the mercy which saves. Here the parts are simply pasted together to form a theme; or the theme is simply sliced into three mechanical parts to form the division. The whole thing is again from a New Testament statement, and all that is left of the text is a lean illustrative thought tied to each of the three parts. And this, too, is printed and preserved in a book! The fact is that there are, on this text at least, more spurious outlines like this, than genuine ones.—Bender's outline: *Naaman's Story*: 1) His disease, (1-8); 2) His cure (9-14); 3) His conversion (15-19), may serve for the preacher's study, it is too thin and cheap for the pulpit.

One more outline may suffice. It is the human interest in any story, that captivates. See how it weaves itself around the persons that move before us in this text. The chief figure will have to appear twice.

Once Upon a Time in Damascus and Samaria:

- I. *There was a mighty general, who was stricken with leprosy.*
- II. *There was a little Jewish maid, who knew her religion.*
- III. *There was a foolish Israelite king, who forgot his God.*
- IV. *There was a wise prophet, who voiced the Word of God.*
- V. *There were sensible heathen servants, who helped their foolish master.*
- VI. *There was that mighty general again, who now believed and confessed the true God,*

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Psalm 93

Attention has already been drawn to the parallel between this text and the old line gospel text for this Sunday. The latter shows us the Savior stilling the tempest; here we read of the floods and waves, and the Lord exalted over all. Thus the subject appears to be: *the omnipotent Lord of the Church*, even also as the superscription of the Psalm is: "The majesty, power, and holiness of Christ's kingdom." As an Epiphany text there is offered us here a manifestation or revelation of our King's glorious power.

1. **The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty;**
the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself:
the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.
2. **Thy throne is established of old:**
thou art from everlasting.

Talmudic tradition reports that this Psalm was sung by the Levites at the Temple worship on Friday afternoon, since on this day the Lord finished his work of creation, and thus began his reign over the created world. His throne and rule thus established continues always, and any powers that rise against it in the course of the world are absolutely doomed.—The theme of the Psalm appears in the two words: **The LORD reigneth, *Yahveh malak***. It is like a terse, striking superscription. Because the verb is in the present tense we may translate: "Jehovah now is

King," or "is reigning." Let us note well the title here used, namely *Yahveh*, and not *'Elohim*; this is our covenant God who reigneth. But not that the world as composed of creatures is here excepted, and only the Church is meant. There is no restriction here in Jehovah's reign. As Jehovah he has reigned, does reign, will reign. And for the new covenant we may put it in the words: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." — Thus we have what lies in the term *theocracy* coined by Josephus. However this is not a form of government as monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy are. These are human in form, temporal, subject to change; theocracy is the supreme divine rule unchanging for ever. As such it became one of the great subjects of prophecy, but in the following way. Jehovah's rule has been challenged by the powers of evil, "the throne of iniquity," Ps. 94, 20. In opposition to this challenge Jehovah established his kingdom of grace in the old covenant, and this culminated with its grace in the mission of the Messiah in the new covenant, and will yet culminate in glory at the last day, Rev. 11, 17; 19, 7. Then at last every hostile power shall be laid low, and the hosts of the Lord shall triumph for ever about his throne. There are really two sides to the Lord's reign, as already indicated: his omnipotent power absolute in itself, and his rule of grace bringing its purposes to fruition and triumph. Both are intertwined and flow together. To put it practically, as one may use it in a sermon, here and in many connections, men are to have it hammered into their brains and hearts that it is the Lord of infinite power and majesty who now meets them with his grace, call, and promise, whose will be the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever. Blessed are all who believe, obey, glorify, and praise his exalted name.

With the theme announced the description now follows. It is all very brief, but it strikes the central

realities and pictures them in a few clean-cut strokes. **He is clothed with majesty**; his royal mantle is exaltation. The idea in this mention of regal apparel is manifestation and revelation — he shows himself in royal splendor to his subjects. This is plainly the Epiphany thought. — The second line repeats and expands: **the Lord is clothed**; but now the specification of just what is meant by “majesty” is used: **with strength**. His majestic mantle, which reveals to us just who he is, we are told is “strength” in the sense of power that inheres in him and that is shown for his subjects to see. — And that we may catch the full import of the word “strength,” ‘oz, the addition states: **he hath girded himself**, hithpael from ‘azar, a warlike word. There are enemies which will not have him to reign over them. This strength is his conquering power. He is going to war against all and everything that rebels against him. Like a warrior-king he stands girded, but the sword at his thigh is his omnipotence. — Now we are not to think of this majestic King far off in the heavens. The domain of his rule, in the revelation here made of him, is this world. Hence the third line states: **the world also is stablished**. By *thebel* is meant the inhabited earth. Beside the positive is placed the negative: **that it cannot be moved**, or simply: “unshaken,” i. e. here in the sense of undisturbed, not wrecked. The implication is that here on this earth and among men a hostile, wrecking power has challenged the Lord. This power has met complete defeat at the Lord’s hands. We see the victorious result in the unmoved and unshaken world. It ought to go without saying that this is not the world merely as the Lord’s creation, but this creation of his, including man as its crown, as the heavenly King’s domain. Satan carried sin and death into it, tried to set up a rebel kingdom in this domain and to usurp the whole of it for his destructive rule, thus shaking and moving the world

with his hellish power. His rebellion and usurpation affect men as the chief creatures in this world, but through men the whole world in its divinely appointed order, goodness, peace, purity, and blessedness. But this desperate attempt proved abortive. — It is, moreover, a prophet's voice that sings in this great Psalm. Characteristic of Old Testament prophecy time intervals are not recorded. We may say, beginning and end are viewed together. Whether we look back to the day of Adam, pass in review any period of past history, or view the history yet to come and the final consummation, it is all the same: "The Lord reigneth." There never was, is, or will be, any other real reigning. The eternal purpose of the Lord as regards the world stands. In and by that purpose as originally formed, as it works out now, and stands at last, the world is established and not moved. — There is almightiness and divinity in words like these, so brief and yet so all-comprehensive; no hypothesis, or even theory, about them, just nothing but reality, the mightiest of all, embracing the beginning and the end all in one. Words like these and thoughts like these are above the power of man's brain and all human wisdom; they are simply divinely revealed. In addition they are uttered by divine inspiration, so that every single word in giving expression to this revealed truth is perfect for its purpose, just as the Lord himself wants it for all time to come for all men to read, know, and believe. These words thus bear in themselves the fullest evidence and proof of both revelation and inspiration; for no man could out of himself think or say these things. To recognize clearly and fully the revelation and inspiration that thus meet us here (and all through the Scriptures) requires, as a matter of course, minds and hearts regenerated by the Lord and filled with spiritual sense and discernment. Hearts spiritually dead and deaf perceive nothing of it all; and hearts clouded

with error to that extent fail in true perception.— As the Psalmist began with the causal fact, and then touched the effect fact, so he reverts again to the causal fact, only now with a new grand view of it. “The Lord reigneth” means, looking at it from this second angle: **Thy throne is established of old,** *nakon* (the niphāl from *kun*), as in Is. 2, 2, which see: “set up,” and thus “fixed,” the same verb as *thikon* in v. 1, where it is predicated of the world. Here the Psalm turns in direct address to the Lord. Whatever men may think or say, the Lord and the singer know the fact here stated. King, reigning, and “throne” are correlatives, so that a king’s reigning means that his throne is fixed and solid. Here, however, “throne” is more than a mere royal adjunct; it is the actual seat of his power and authority, from which his edicts reach out to the farthest borders of his domain. The Lord’s throne is thus fixed solidly *me’az* (*min* plus *’az*), an adverb: *von einstmals her*; margin: “from then,” i. e. from away back.— How far back the next line shows: **thou from everlasting;** or more emphatically: “from everlasting *thou!*” This King and his throne are eternal; hence he never could be shaken or dethroned. All his purposes too, which we now see as never failing, are also eternal, and could not possibly fail. The adverb *me’olam* signifies that his being reaches back beyond all human sight or even thought. Here again are facts to which no human mind could rise by its own logic and perception.

3. **The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
the floods have lifted up their voice;
the floods lift up their waves.**
4. **The LORD on high is mightier
than the noise of many waters,
yea than the mighty waves of the sea.**

The **floods** are really streams, like the Euphrates, Tigris, and Nile. The English reproduces the tenses well, translating the two Hebrew perfects as past history tenses: **have lifted up**; and the Hebrew imperfect as an English present tense: **lift up**. The sense is that the floods did so in the past, and are doing so now also. The word translated **their voice**, *qolam* (*qol*) is "sound," or roar; and *dokiyam*, rare and of doubtful meaning, seems to be not **waves**, but smashing crash. Thus the picture in v. 3 is of mighty streams, breaking their bounds, roaring along and crashing against obstacles. The repetition of "floods" and "lift up" paints the scene of the rushing waters vividly before our eyes. Man, of course, stands helpless before their might. — The Hebrew in v. 4 has its difficulties. *Min* at the head of the first line is assured as comparative. So we translate: More than the thunder of many waters — the mighty, the breakers of the ocean — (more) mighty on high the LORD. The advance is to the waters of the ocean and the roaring breakers on some rocky coast. How utterly puny is man against such forces. But the **Lord on high** is **mightier**, 'addir, Ger. *gewaltig*. — But now come the commentators, and not content with the plain grand statements in these two verses, allegorize them completely. Since "floods" and "waters" are sometimes used in figurative language for armies and nations, they must, forsooth, mean the same thing here. These thunderings and these crashing breakers must mean human tumults and uprisings against the Lord. But look at the text — is there a single word in these two verses that hints at such an allegory? There is none. These "floods" are floods; these "waters" waters, and that is all, and that is enough. It is the same as in the old gospel lesson, where preachers love to allegorize: the boat is the church; the wind and waves are the hostile world, etc. And yet the entire old gospel is nothing

but a matter-of-fact historical account. Right here let us learn once for all not to carry allegory into any Scriptural text. Even when ingeniously and soberly done, it is *never* exegesis, at best only applicatory use of the text. There is plenty of allegory in the Scriptures, without the uncalled-for insertion of allegorical notions of our own. Thus when Christ tells us: I am the vine; ye are the branches, i. e. the vine pictures him, and its branches picture us in relation to him. We need not carry this into the text; the text itself has it and offers it to us. But in these two verses of our Psalm there is nothing of this kind. Do not, then, cast it in, and, adding insult to injury, act as if you had found it there. No; the Psalm simply takes one of the actual creations of God, full of terrific power, the flood-waters of some powerful river torrent, and the ocean waters crashing on the rocks, and compares with this mighty force, before which man stands aghast, the infinitely greater power of the Lord. These torrents and breakers, these roaring and thundering masses, are puny beside his power. He commands them at will. Look at Jesus stilling the tempest, once with a word, and once with his mere will. Instead of allegorizing the text, and making its words say what they never did say, let us use simple homiletical appropriation: he who is mightier than the mightiest forces in nature, is almighty; no power in the universe can overthrow him or his kingdom. Believe it, and let it be your comfort.

**5. Thy testimonies are very sure:
holiness becometh thine house,
O LORD, for ever.**

Throughout the Psalm the name *Yahueh* is used, the unchanging covenant God. It is he who reigns, whose throne is established, who is mightier than any might we see on earth. And when we praise and magnify his great power we are always to think of

this his covenant relation to us. This mighty King is our King of grace; his majesty and strength, and his glorious reign throw their true light upon his Word and his Church by which his eternal purpose is carried to its consummation. Addressing him once more the Psalmist summarizes the covenant features in two pithy statements, the first of which is: **Thy testimonies are very sure.** In Ps. 22, 4 we had "the Testimony of Israel" as designating the tables of the law; here we have the plural with the possessive referring to the Lord. These then are all the words of the Lord by which he declares to us his will, purpose, law, Gospel, grace and promise, threats, and judgment. It is he himself who by these testimonies witnesses to us what these divine realities really are. In them he himself speaks, and that means for these words revelation and inspiration. They are the testimonies of him who reigns clothed in majesty and strength, as the previous verses have revealed him; hence his testimonies are **very sure**, Rev. 19, 9; 22, 6; they cannot fail because he who utters them cannot fail. Thus they both call forth and justify in the highest possible degree our faith, and make all mistrust and unbelief an outrage against him. And for us thus to recognize his reign and then to read his testimonies is the highest comfort and joy.—Just as tersely is added the parallel statement: **holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.** In *qodesh* the basic idea is separation from that which is profane, and dedication to the Lord. We follow Koenig in reading *na'awah* as the niphal of *'awah*, "to be desired," hence: **becometh**, is fitting for. For the Lord's "house" nothing else and nothing less could possibly be fitting and proper. There are those who follow Delitzsch in making **thine house** mean the Temple of old; this is, they say, sacred, and any profanation will again be abolished by holiness. Delitzsch even finds a prayer for such holiness of the Temple

suggested by the Psalmist's words. But we dare not overlook the prophetic nature of this Psalm. This "house" is not just one of a certain period or age, and then besides one of stone or earthly material. Holiness inheres only in a derived sense in buildings, furniture, utensils, and the like. "Thine house" here denotes the Lord's people, whether at the Lord's command they worship at a certain place, or worship anywhere in spirit and in truth, whether in the first or in the last covenant. And "holiness" for them means that they are wholly separated unto the Lord, "*thine* house," as the Psalmist puts it. And that **for ever**, lit. "for duration of days," i. e. as long as the world stands and there is a house of Lord, and after the consummation in the glorified new earth. This is the sanctification meant by the Third Article in "the *holy* Christian Church."

One thing more must be added. The Psalm uses *Yahveh*, and throughout the Old Testament the theocracy is described as under Jehovah, and then again as under the Messiah. This is no duality. Ps. 2 has the solution: the King upon the holy hill of Zion is the Son, he who became incarnate, he who twice stilled the actual tempests while he walked this earth, he who reigns over the house of the Lord for ever, he before whom every knee shall bow and confess that he is Lord. This is the full revelation of the Psalmist's theme: **The Lord reigneth.**

SUGGESTIONS

The gospel for to-day tells us that Jesus rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. In the same way the Psalmist of old sang: "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."

But will men believe it? The so-called "modern man" claims to have achieved a new world view by means of "science."

Natural law rules supreme, and in this scientific view there is no room for the royal hand of the Lord to guide, direct, and interfere. The Gospel account of Jesus stilling the tempest is turned into a pious myth; our Psalm with the Lord reigning over floods and waves is made the poetic effusion of a crude age which knew nothing of the wonders of present-day science.

Faith accepts this challenge of modern unbelief. It laughs at the scientific folly which thinks it sees laws, but claims it cannot see the Lawgiver behind and above them; which measures and calculates mighty natural forces, but denies him who set these forces into motion and controls them by his invisible hand. In the face of all unbelief we joyfully confess the Father Almighty and the Son sitting at his right hand. We make our own the Psalmist's theme:

"The Lord Reigneth!"

And the Psalmist points out to us:

- I. *The evidence of his royal power.*
- II. *The law of his royal rule.*
- III. *The goal of his royal dominion.*

This introduction and division is from H. Kessler, who intends an analytical division. He takes v. 1 and 2 as displaying the Lord's rule, establishing the world and governing all things with his strength; v. 3 and 4 as picturing allegorically the hostile powers of sin among men, the law of the Lord's rule being to let sin ripen and then to overwhelm it with judgment; and v. 5 as declaring in his testimonies his divine purpose, which is realized in the holy Christian Church here and in its perfection of holiness above. The second part seems least textual. More textual would be a division like this: 1) His throne; 2) His domain; 3) His testimonies and his house. — Perhaps a simple outline like this will cover all the main features of the text:

"The Lord Reigneth!"

- I. *"The world is established."*
- II. *"Thy testimonies are very sure."*

The elaboration along these lines: 1) Christ's majesty; 2) Girded against foes; 3) The world perfect at creation shall be so again at the consummation; 4) Floods and waters, how puny; 5) The eternal throne. — 1) This is he who witnesses to

us in his testimonies; 2) How sure every word; 3) Faith, and unbelief; 4) All his Church devoted only to him. — In appreciating an outline like that from Moll we must weigh the substance of the thought, and not measure the number of the words: **The Continuance of Christ's Kingdom in this World** is put beyond all doubt by 1) *The firmness of his throne*; 2) *The sureness of his Word*; 3) *The holiness of his house*. —

The Lord is Mightier than the Mighty Waves of the Sea.

We know:

- I. *The majesty of his throne.*
- II. *The strength of his judgments.*
- III. *The glory of his world-plan.*
- IV. *The sureness of his Word.*
- V. *The holiness of his Church.*

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Ezekiel 33, 10-16

The pith of this text is in v. 11 with its call to *repentance*, and the divine assurance that God wants the wicked to repent and live. Ezekiel, like Daniel, was a prophet of the exile. But while Daniel was carried away in the first deportation and lived at the king's court, Ezekiel was carried away later, and was set as a watchman over the deported people of his nation to preach to them God's judgment and his salvation, and thus to call them to repentance. Ezekiel was taken into exile in the year 599 B. C., and lived in Mesopotamia in a colony of exiled Judeans on the banks of the river Chebar; he was married (24, 18), and dwelt in his own house. His prophecies are all dated, and are thus made the plainer. He was made a prophet in the fifth year of his exile and spoke as a prophet, as far as we know, for 22 years, 595-572 B. C. (29, 17). We know nothing further about his life or his death, save that it was spent among the exiles and ended before the return. The collection of the revelations made to him is divided into two parts: 1) the announcement of judgment on Israel and the heathen nations, ch. 1-32; 2) the announcement of salvation for Israel, ch. 33-48. Our text is from the first chapter of the second part. Eleven years had elapsed since Ezekiel had been carried away, and six years since he began his announcement of judgment on Israel. Now, in the year 588 Jerusalem was laid waste and the national existence of Judah ended. The judgment prophecies on Judah were fulfilled, and Ezekiel begins to announce deliverance and salvation and the one road to this goal, namely true repentance.

10. Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel: Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? 11. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

The judgment has come — Jerusalem is in ashes, Judah is a nation no more. But even now these exiles are not repentant. Once they complained that they, the children, had to suffer for what their fathers did, making God unjust, 18, 2; now they howl in despair, admitting their own sins indeed, but only because they had been made to feel them, not because they hated them and would put them away. They seem to lament over themselves, but really they still murmur against God, who is letting them rot in their sins, and how then shall they live, i. e. get life and thus live? Here the mission of Ezekiel sets in anew. God bids him cut off this complaint by a mighty call to repentance and pardon. — **Therefore** connects with the previous section, in which Ezekiel is made Judah's responsible watchman. He now learns what he is to do at this time in his office. The address **O son of man** is in line with that. This designation is not to call him only a mere man as over against God, for which there is no reason here; but a title that combines the prophet with his people. As the son of man he is one of them, yet singled out and placed as a watchman among them, one who thus has the closest personal interest in them. God is making the prophet's people dependent on him, so that he must both warn and direct them and be held accountable for doing it just as God demands. — He is to **speak to the house of Israel** for God and in the name of God, what God

tells him. This is the function of the ministry now, only we are to speak the written revelation, while the old prophets spoke the revelation given them in an immediate manner. There is covert grace in the title "house of Israel," which names the people as Israel's family. God thus acknowledges the old covenant of promise made with Jacob as still holding on God's part for these children of the patriarch. They had broken that covenant and forsaken it, and God is now calling them back.— Yet, to begin with, God is compelled to confront them with their own continued perversity: **Thus ye speak**, ye who should speak far otherwise, at least now. *Le'mor* introduces their words: **saying**; or we might translate: "namely." — In their statement: **If our transgressions and our sins be upon us** (better: "are upon us"), *phesha'* is "transgression" in the sense of rebellion, defection from God and all that this includes; and *chatta'th* is "sin" in the sense of missing the mark set by the law of God, violating his norm of right. The two are often used together, for men constantly rise up against God and disregard his will as revealed in the law. — For transgression and sin to be **upon us** signifies that the guilt rests like a burden upon the sinners, and the resulting curse and penalty like a crushing weight. The conditional **if** is meant of reality, hence the verb to supply is "are," not "be." These Jews were now actually feeling the curse and penalty; there was no denying it. — This they express by adding: **and we pine away in them**, describing thus their helpless and mournful state. The piel part. *nemaqqim*, from *maqaq*, means literally: in the condition of melting away by moldering (rotting). The figure is highly expressive, picturing a body dead and starting to decay. Nor is this overdrawing the facts. As a nation Judah was as good as dead, and during these years in exile just like a body moldering and disintegrating. — But let

us not suppose that these people have come to a right knowledge of their sins. One way to escape true repentance is to blame somebody else for our punishment; the other is to look at our great sin and heavy punishment and say there is no use to repent. These exiles were doing the latter. Schmieder puts it thus: We have sinned so much that we are lost anyway; if we wanted to repent it would be of no use any more. Richter: they felt their sins, they did not hate them. And Schroeder points out that this giving up under sin and penalty is only another kind of resistance against grace and persistence in impenitence. This refusal to yield in true sorrow of heart for sin and guilt comes out in the question: **how should we then live?** The sense is: there is no use, we cannot live. But by implying this negative answer these people turn once more from all the offers of grace heretofore made to them in their sin. They ignore the way of repentance hitherto pointed out to them, as if it were not there, or as if they did not know it was there. Since the penalty is upon them so that they cannot escape it any more, they say they are lost. For all they think of is to get free of the penalty, and not of their sin as such. So the sinner often acts. All he wants is to shake off the penalty, and when that becomes impossible he whimpers and cries as one who is wronged; but repent — no, for that his ears are deaf. A. Pfeiffer thinks that “live” must here be taken spiritually. This forgets that we are in the Old Testament. “Live” here means: live happily, under the divine favor, with the penalty removed; “live” thus as a nation, and as individuals, now in the promised earthly land, and eventually in the promised heavenly land.

There is a mighty answer to make to words and thoughts like these, and Ezekiel is ordered to make it: 1) absolute denial of any implication that God by sending his punishment means for the sinner sim-

ply to die; 2) based on this, the renewed gracious and most hearty call of God for the sinner under his penalty to repent, and thus not die, but live. **Say unto them**, while it repeats the order given in v. 10, reflects the earnestness of God in holding out his grace to these undeserving people. — God's statement begins with an oath: **As I live**, *hay-'ani*, lit. "living I" = "as truly as I live." Since God cannot swear by a greater, he swears by himself; and Ezekiel has this oath thirteen times, plus three variant forms. Every oath of God is for us the ultimate of assurance, thus calling for our faith with the supreme effort God himself can make. To disbelieve his Word is to make him a liar; but to disbelieve his oath is to make him a perjurer, and there is no worse blasphemy. Moreover, the oath of God leaves the sinner no alternative: either he believes this oath as the ultimate divine assurance, or he blasphemes him who makes this oath. The Apology, Jacobs 195, 94 etc. quotes Tertullian on this divine oath: "He invites by reward to salvation, even swearing. Saying, 'I live,' he desires that he be believed. O blessed we, for whose sake God swears! O most miserable, if we believe not the Lord when he swears!" And the Apology itself says: "Wherefore, if any one be not confident that he is forgiven, he denies that God has sworn what is true, than which a more horrible blasphemy cannot be imagined." — Matched with the oath is the name of him who makes it: '*Adonay Yahveh*, translated in our version **the Lord GOD**, not "the Lord LORD," but with capital letters for God: the Lord of all, the covenant Lord, i. e. who unites all power and rule in himself and yet in unchanging grace maintains his covenant with us. Thus the oath is backed with might and grace all in one. There is absolutely no possibility even of this oath being broken. — God's sworn statement is: **I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked**. The sinner is here termed *rasha'*, the

wicked, a strong term, the German *Frevler*, one who acts nefariously. The word points to the full guilt of the sinner. There is no question but what the sinner must suffer **death** for this guilt, and death in the full sense of the word, namely everlasting separation from God. No human judge or lawgiver if he be just, and least of all the divine Judge who himself is justice, can alter that verdict. But now when it is executed, and death befalls the sinner, it is a different question whether God delights in that death. He does not, and in fact he cannot. It is easy to see why. God is life; he himself calls himself in his oath "living": "as I live." Death is the opposite of God. Life, to give life, to maintain and increase life, that is God's delight, and that means the bestowal in and with life also of light, joy, blessedness, and all that belongs to the communion with God; while death involves darkness, agony, howling and gnashing of teeth, and all that goes with the companionship of the devil. Let no sinner then blame God when the penalty of death is visited upon him. — To intensify this sworn statement it is also put positively: **but that the wicked turn from his way and live**. Even though he be *rasha'* and deserving only of death, God's pleasure is that he **turn**, escape death, and live. Here we meet the cardinal word *shub*, "to turn," or "to turn back," used repeatedly in this text, with the equivalent ἐπιστρέφειν in the New Testament. **Turn from his way** is figurative, *dereq* picturing the sinner's condition and actions as a **way** or road on which he goes forward. This is the "way" of death, for its very course is spiritual death and its end eternal death. Now the pleasure of God is to see the sinner "turn" and thus get off this "way" of death entirely. While it is not said, this means to get upon that other way prepared of God by his grace, the way which is spiritual life and whose goal is heavenly life. This second way is indicated by the

word: **and live**, have, enjoy, and keep forever true life. The word *shub*, "turn," thus conveys what lies in the word repent or be converted, the inner change of the heart, actually turning in true sorrow from sin and guilt to the grace and pardon offered by God. This turning is contrition and faith (*fiducia*) combined. No sinner can of himself or by his natural powers, which are all in the grip of sin, make this turn, flee death, and live. The power that turns him is the divine grace embodied in the Word and call of God, striking his ears and heart, finally penetrating it, gripping and holding it, and thus effecting the turn. "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." Jer. 31, 18. — This efficacious grace in the Word is embodied right here in the sworn statement Ezekiel is to throw into the hearts of these exiled sinners. For besides the proclamation of what the Lord's pleasure really is, the prophet is to voice the earnest call of God: **turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways**, and for "evil" the same word is used as for "wicked" a moment ago. The doubling of the call is found all through the Scripture, as for instance Matth. 23, 37: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" and Luke 10, 41: "Martha, Martha!" It is always a mark of love and grace. Here it is a potent appeal from the mighty God of grace to the lost and wretched sinner, surely penetrating in its effect. The plural **ways** is now used where we have just had "way," much as once we read sins, and then again sin. — The effect of this saving call is heightened by the question which sounds literally like pleading: **for why will ye die, O house of Israel?** An astounding thing: men bent on dying forever, and God begging them to live, i. e. take life from him! Could there be any greater assurance that God has no pleasure in their death? In the final address: **O house of Israel**, there is the same appeal as in this title in v. 10. Really, one might expect that the sinners would

cry in heartrending pleas to God to save them from dying, and that the holy God would reluctantly yield at last and throw them a little help. Instead, these sinners complain and accuse God, stick to their sins, will not let go of death, and it is God in his infinite grace who keeps stretching out his hands to them, literally begging them to forsake their death.*

12. Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his *righteousness* in the day that he sinneth. 13. When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust in his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. 14. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; 15. If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he hath robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. 16. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

* The Formula of Concord, J. 663, 81 in a fine way puts sin and death side by side: "As God does not wish *sin*, and has no pleasure in sin, he also does not wish the *death* of the sinner, and has no pleasure in his condemnation." How indeed could he wish the sinner's death when he does not wish and will the sin that causes the death? As an example the Formula cites Pharaoh (664, 84), who was not lost because God did not desire his salvation, or because God wanted him to be condemned and lost—outstanding sinner though he was. It is Calvinism that contradicts this doctrine.

In these verses the Lord is repeating and making a new application of what he had already revealed in 18, 20-32. **Therefore** connects the explanation now made with the foregoing sworn statement of God, elucidating that and making it very plain by taking up the cases and stating exactly how they stand in God's sight. But this entire explanatory section would be turned into rank Pharisaism, Romanism, and Socinianism, if the righteousness here spoken of is conceived as obedience to the Mosaic law. Some strangely think of the old covenant as a law-covenant, and suppose that the Jews had to keep the law to be saved, and then speak as if God were calling these exiles to turn back from their transgression of the law to this observance of the law. Instead of interpreting, that kind of exegesis perverts. Others think that God is here condemning false righteousness, called also man's own righteousness or work-righteousness; and that he is trying to turn these exiles from this useless righteousness. That twists God's statements by thrusting in what they do not contain. No; the righteousness here spoken of is that which consists in God's own verdict, pronouncing a man just at the bar of his judgment. It is the true *justitia imputata*, pardon through grace by faith. And this righteousness has as its fruit and evidence the righteousness of a godly life, the *justitia acquisita*, good works pleasing to God. — **Thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people**, means: as one of them, who has been made responsible for them. And he is bidden to say: **The righteousness of the righteous etc.** "The righteous" is the man whom God pronounces righteous; and his "righteousness" is the verdict of God declaring him righteous. This is the genuine righteousness that avails before God, including remission of sin and the imputation of the Messiah's merits. It is obtained by contrition and faith only. But a man may lose this righteousness. And that is what is stated

here: **in the day of his transgression, *phesha'*** as in v. 10, "rebellion" and defection from God. The verdict which once he had **shall not deliver him** then, pull him out, from *natsal*. Nothing is said here about work-righteousness, built up by man's own efforts; for such a righteousness would have been worthless in the first place. — Now the parallel statement on the wicked: **as for** (really "and") **the wickedness of the wicked**, using *rasha'* as in v. 11, *Frevler*; **he shall not fall thereby etc.**, niph'al of *kashal*. In his wickedness he indeed had God's verdict against him and was adjudged guilty, but this shall not stand **in the day that he turneth** (*shub*) **from his wickedness**, and repents. — A third statement is added to this parallel. It deals again with the righteous **in the day that he sinneth**, now using *chatta'*, cf. *chatta'th* in v. 10. Where before we were told that his one-time righteousness "shall not deliver him," we are told: **neither shall he be able to live for his righteousness**, *yukal* from *yakol*, with the inf. constr. *lich^eyoth* from *chayah*. He who loses the true righteousness loses the true life. This final statement is added because of the despairing question in v. 10: "how then shall we live?"

Verse 13 takes up the righteous again and makes the matter still plainer. Not only is life and death brought in, but righteousness and the lack of it as both due to the verdict of God, and thus involving on the one hand life, on the other death. **When I shall say**, as the Judge who acquits or condemns, **to the righteous: he shall surely live**, actually gives us the verdict as such and in so many words, and in the form here pertinent as giving spiritual life. The doubling *chayah yichyeh* is our English "surely live." — But, as already stated: once justified is not necessarily always justified. If now the righteous man whom God has given life act foolishly or presumptuously, and **trust in his own righteousness, *hu'***,

namely he on his part; if he imagine that what he has from God he cannot lose, and so **commit iniquity**, 'aval, wrong, perversity, not in agreement with his righteousness: then **all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered**, niph'al from *zakar*: shall not be considered, or accounted to him at the judgment bar of God. The plural "righteousnesses" is used, for both the imputed and the acquired righteousness shall be forgotten, and no claim from either be allowed. That God once acquitted him, and that in that state he did many good works truly pleasing to God, shall be completely wiped out, with the result that for the iniquity he committed, **he shall die for it**. By this iniquity is not meant some venial sin, sins of weakness, ignorance, such as godly men shall fall into and for which they daily and richly find forgiveness from God; but iniquity as a state, mortal sin, connected with pride and presumption and thus preventing contrition.

And now again the parallel of the wicked. On him, too, a verdict is pronounced: **when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die**, *moth thamuth*, the same doubling as in v. 13. That is the only verdict possible, and it rests on every man who is in the state of sin. — But now, a man with this verdict upon him: **if he turn from his sin**, through God's Word and grace, turn by repenting, turn not from the penalty, merely to run away from that, but from the *chatta'th*, the "sin" as violating God's norm of right and offending God himself: then the old verdict shall no longer stand against this man. — To make fully plain what lies in *shab*, this sinner's turning, we have the addition: **and do that which is lawful and right**, *mishphat*, what is lawful in God's own court, and thus the opposite of *chatta'th*; and *tsedaqah*, that which agrees with the norm of right as maintained in God's court, and thus the opposite of both 'aval, iniquity, and *resha'*, wickedness. These new acts are the outward

evidence of the inner change of heart due to his having turned and repented. — In v. 15, to make the thing still plainer, specifications are added in concrete fashion, compare 18, 6-8. Two legal acts are mentioned first as specifying “that which is lawful,” *mishphat*: if the wicked restore the pledge, return it, or turn it back, *yashib*, also from *shub*, namely the hiphil, instead of wrongfully retaining the pledged object; secondly, give again that he had robbed, *yeshallem*, piel of *shalem*, make return or restitution. We may say, these are coarse cases, infractions of the common law, and thus criminal. Yet they plainly illustrate the point: a gross sinner who truly repents will show it by submitting contritely to the law which he formerly thought nothing of violating. — The two acts mentioned are really negative, merely making good in part past wrongs. Now follows the positive: **walk in the statutes of life**, which for one thing is comprehensive, not one act merely, but a course of conduct, and for another thing the most indisputable evidence of repentance, since to walk in the ways of life is full proof of having life. The expression “statutes of life,” really “statutes that are living,” is unique and occurs only here, but is evidently used because of the question of living and dying which governs this section. One who repents, is justified, and made spiritually alive shows it by walking in the statutes of life, i. e. by a conduct according with these divine requirements. God has fixed them; they are the “good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,” Eph. 2, 10. Being “ordained” they may bear the title “statutes.” They are “living” because they belong to the new life. Only one who lives spiritually can walk in them. A. Pfeiffer’s idea, that they transmit life, is wholly wrong. He refers to Rom. 10, 5: “That the man which doeth these things shall live by them,” overlooking entirely that this is “the righteousness which is of the law”

described by Moses. The Jews tried, all in vain "to establish their own righteousness," Rom. 10, 3, by fulfilling the law, rejecting God's gift of righteousness in Christ. Yes, if only we could fulfill the statutes of the law we would live in them. Ezekiel is not told by God to hold out to the exiles this impossible way of life, but to preach to them repentance and God's pardon, and the life that comes thus, not by our merit, but by God's grace and gift. This life, springing from divine grace, with its new powers manifests itself in running the way of God's commandments, in all manner of good works, such as confession of sin and of faith, the worship of faith, and all the deeds of love to God and man. — The addition **without committing iniquity** is added for greater clearness. We catch what is meant when we look at the same expression in v. 13, where, just as here, it means a course of conduct contrary to the life of one who is justified. It cannot mean perfect sinlessness, for then no man could be saved. — Thus the picture is complete: **he shall surely live**, the infinitive added for emphasis; **he shall not die**, the negative increasing the emphasis. So Ezekiel is to tell these exiles once more how they, though still in the bondage of death, can indeed live. And not only is their question thus answered: "How should we then live?" but the grace of God in and through his Word strikes their hearts once more to tear them out of the blackness of their death, and lift them into the light and on to the height of life. — The final statements in v. 16 clinch what has been said. When a man who has thus turned, v. 14, and repented comes up, at any time, before the judgment bar of God, **none of the sins that he hath committed**, really: "that he hath sinned," **shall be mentioned unto him**, again *zakar*, as in v. 13: "shall be considered," or accounted to him. They shall be wiped out by God's pardon for the Messiah's sake, so that even God shall have lost record of them in his court. —

As in the description of the last judgment in Matth. 25, 31 etc., the works of faith as the public evidence of faith shall be brought forward in the judgment: **he hath done that which is lawful and right**, v. 14. — And the verdict is recorded now already, in advance: **he shall surely live**. God's own oath seals that verdict for ever. There is no higher court which can reverse it or set it aside.

SUGGESTIONS

This text is exceedingly rich. It deals with *repentance*, for it has in it repeatedly the cardinal term *shub*, which means turn. Equally this is a text on *justification*, for it deals throughout with righteousness and its opposite, namely, God's verdict on the penitent and on the impenitent sinner. So also it is a text on *life and death*, for this point also runs through the entire text. Now, of course, the preacher may make any one of these three cardinal points the substance of his theme and arrange the division accordingly. Yet this may be done so as to include the other two points, and not to lose them. We may put it this way: The repentant sinner alone is justified, and by justification alone escapes death and gains life. — With these things in mind it seems rather useless to try to build an ordinary analytical outline on this text by following the text order of thought. It seems far better to deal with the substance of the text irrespective of the order in which that substance is unfolded in the text. If thus we settle on the thought for our theme, that the gracious will of God is that the sinner may not die but live, we will find that the text itself offers us a good formulation for this thought:

"Why Will Ye Die, O House of Israel?"

This has color, for it reminds the hearer at once of the text from which these words are taken. The parts are formed from the evident implications in the theme, which also the text itself presents. These we may formulate ourselves:

I. There is a way to escape through repentance.

- 1) The sinner's anguish when he is brought low, often thinking that he is hopelessly lost.

- 2) The anguished sinner is to hear God's call to turn from his sin.
- 3) There is divine grace and saving power in this call.
- 4) God wills to make the sinner turn truly, not merely to escape the temporal penalty, but to get rid of the sin and guilt itself.
- 5) Thus to turn is to escape.

II. Because repentance assures justification.

- 1) As long as the sinner remains impenitent God's verdict is against him: Guilty!
- 2) This is the case even if once the sinner was justified and lived godly.
- 3) The moment the sinner repents God's verdict is in his favor: Acquitted!
- 4) This is the case no matter what the sins have been.
- 5) God's acquittal always rests on the atoning merits of his Son, Christ the Messiah.

III. And justification assures life.

- 1) Sin and guilt always mean death, separation from God who is life.
- 2) To be rid of sin and guilt through God's justification admits to life, spiritual and eternal life.
- 3) The evidences of this life appear as soon as the sinner is justified.
- 4) This life, kept and nourished by God, will at last be crowned with heavenly glory.

Following the same general trend of thought we may make our theme the blessed word of grace with which God calls sinners to salvation:

"As I Live, I Have No Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked!"

- I. God pities the dying sinners.*
- II. God calls the dying sinners to repentance.*
- III. God justifies the repentant sinners.*
- IV. God grants life to the justified sinners.*

Again in simple fashion we may use God's own call to repentance and combine it with the chief things in our text: Do you know what all lies in this call of God to poor, dying sinners:

"Turn Ye, Turn Ye, O House of Israel!"

1) *Grace*; 2) *Repentance*; 3) *Justification*; 4) *Amendment*; 5) *Life*.

Besides repentance as the starting point and governing thought, there is justification, and also life, which can be utilized in the same way. For instance:

Life and Death in God's Verdict.

- I. The wicked who remains in his wickedness must die.*
- II. The righteous who becomes wicked must also die.*
- III. The righteous who remains righteous shall live.*
- IV. The wicked who becomes righteous shall also live.*

A novel and striking outline is one of Pfeiffer's:

Why Will Ye Die?"

- I. Let us die, before we die!*
- II. That we may not die, when we die!*

Langsdorff speaks of *φάρμακον ἀθανασίας* and *ἀντίδοτον θανάτου*, both of which offer suggestions for themes. Take the latter:

God's Antidote Against Death.

First, when men sin they fool themselves and think they can escape death for all their sinning. When the penalty begins to crush them they fool themselves again thinking that they cannot escape death for their sinning. Both times they play into the devil's hands. There is a sure antidote against death. 1) It is God's grace; 2) It is taken by truly repenting; 3) It immediately works pardon; 4) It is rapidly followed by amendment (sure signs of life); 5) It infallibly kills death and creates life.—Get that antidote, it is dispensed without cost. And don't fail to take it.

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Exodus 3, 1-6

The account contained in our text is quite simple and really needs but little elucidation. We see that this text is an Old Testament parallel to the Transfiguration which constitutes the old gospel text for this Sunday. In both there is a gracious revelation of promise. At the Transfiguration Jesus is revealed as the Son of God all-glorious, and yet in lowliness about to work out our redemption; for Moses and Elijah speak to him of the decease he is about to accomplish at Jerusalem. That same Son of God is here revealed at Horeb as the Angel of Jehovah, as *the God of the Covenant* who has come to keep and to carry out his covenant with the people of Israel. Full of the Epiphany idea of manifestation this text also calls for our faith. — Moses is now 80 years old, and half of his life he has spent as it seems in utter uselessness here in Midian in humble pastoral surrounding. Eighty years, the present limit of our life, and nothing done — so it seemed. All the fine education he had received in Egypt as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter — what had it produced here amid these lonely mountains and valleys? All the great ambitions he had cherished in his younger years, and tried to start toward realization — like a mirage they had faded as one decade after another found him lost in Midian. But — and that is the main thing — Moses was a far different man now than he was 40 years before. He was now fit to become the great instrument God intended him to be. This text describes the first revelation God made to Moses. However, it stops with that and includes nothing about Moses' call.

1. **Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.**

Moses was engaged in keeping, *hayah ro'eh*, the flock; the participle indicates a steady occupation. We may well suppose that Moses had followed it ever since he definitely settled in Midian with Reuel. Keil retains **father-in-law**, others translate *choten*, the participial adjective as brother-in-law. They suppose that Reuel was dead, and that **Jethro**, his oldest son had come to take his place, Hohab, Num. 10, 29; Jud. 4, 11, being a younger brother. Such a thing is possible, only the text itself, as well as 2, 16, gives no hint of it. "Jethro" means "the excellent," pointing to rank, and may well have been the title of Reuel, "friend of God," among his tribe. — Jethro is called **the priest of Midian**, which repeats *kohen Midyan* from 2, 16. Those who think Jethro was Reuel's oldest son conclude that he had inherited the priestly office of his father. Yet this title seems rather to identify Reuel and Jethro. We would expect a transfer to a son to be indicated in some way. — While engaged in his pastoral duties Moses at one time **led the flock to the backside of the desert**, really "back of" or "behind" the desert. The home of Reuel was, apparently, south-east of Horeb, and separated from the mountain stretch by a desert tract. Moses crossed this waste land with his flock, and ascended the elevated sections where the valleys were very fertile and even fruit trees grew. — We are told that he **came to the mountain of God, to Horeb**, which is, however, not a single peak, but the mountain masses rising in a number of elevations in this peninsula. That makes it impossible to find the valley here indicated. Tradition points to the Wady Schoeib, i. e. Valley of Jethro, lying between Dschebel Musa and Dschebel ed Deir, two ridges on the southern side of the

mountain complex. A monastery has been erected on the supposed spot where the burning bush stood. The designation "the mountain of God" is usually explained as due to the revelation now to be recorded, since there is no evidence that this locality was sacred in earlier times. It seems a bit fanciful for Stosch to attribute premonition of what was impending to Moses, making him seek out this sacred locality. We much prefer to think that Moses knew these higher valleys well, and had frequently sought them with his flocks when the heat spoiled the pasture fields in the lower valleys where his home was at this time. What his thoughts and feelings were now, or in earlier days, who can tell? Left so long without even a providential sign from God, it may well be that he had ceased to expect anything during his lifetime. In fact, it is quite God's way to begin the execution of his plans when men have given up all hope. So we take it that the ordinary necessity of finding good pasture for the flock induced Moses to make the weary trip across the intervening arid stretch in order to reach these upper valleys where there was abundant pasturage and water. He knew and expected nothing beyond what he had found here at other times.

2. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush *was* not consumed.

Who is this **angel of the LORD**, *mal'ach Yahveh*? He is mentioned again and again in the Old Testament, and ceases to appear as such in the New. He is Jehovah himself, the Logos of the New Testament, the Son of God. A study of the pertinent passages reveals that the Maleach Yahveh identifies himself with Yahveh and Elohim, revealing his divine attributes and performing divine works. Again, they to whom he appears recognize him as God, by ad-

dressing him as Adonay, which is God the Lord, by declaring that they have seen God and therefore fear they must die, and by offering him sacrifice and worship, both of which are received. Finally, the inspired writers themselves call this Angel Jehovah. He reveals himself in different ways according to the purpose to be attained. Sometimes it is in the form of an angel or a figure like that of a man; sometimes he is invisible and is revealed only by his voice; once, namely in our text, he uses fiery flames from which he speaks; and on another occasion a towering pillar of cloud and of fire. It is by no means true that he always used the form of an angel. In the Old Testament Yahveh and the Maleach Yahveh are distinguished as two persons, furnishing the clearest kind of evidence for the plurality of persons in the Old Testament revelation. All modern denial by unbelieving critics, blind Unitarians, and misled Christian interpreters has failed completely in invalidating this piece of evidence, as well as all the other evidence, cumulatively establishing the fact that the Holy Trinity was both revealed in the Old Testament and recognized by those to whom the revelation was given and transmitted. — As Moses led his sheep up the valley, or while the flock was feeding with Moses guarding them, the Angel of the Lord **appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush.** The verb, the niphal from *ra'ah*, means “to become visible.” The fire was the form here chosen for this visibility. Really it is the fire flaming up in the bush and burning without consuming the bush. The word **bush**, *s^eneh*, cannot be identified beyond the closer rendering “thornbush.” Whether it was a blackberry bush, as has been surmised, or the thorny acacia, or some other bramble-bush, who will say. It seems incorrect to suppose that the mass of brambles from which the flame shot up was dead and dry. The whole valley was green, grass, herbs, and bushes furnishing

abundant food for Moses' flock. Strange and astonishing sight to see a flame of fire shooting up from one of these thickets! — **And he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed,** not eaten up, *'ukkal*, pual part. from *'akal*. This simple fact showed at once that the flame of fire was supernatural. It did not spread and turn the brambles to ashes, but left them wholly unharmed. It took but a moment or two for Moses to register this astounding fact. This appearance of the Lord has been recognized as by no means accidental or merely odd and peculiar, but as highly symbolical. That thornbush symbolized the people of God, who indeed were lowly like a bush, not lordly like a grand tree. Other nations had such a lordly air, not Israel, especially at this time under the Egyptian yoke. The fire that burns and consumes is the symbol of purifying tribulation or of destructive punishment, 1 Cor. 3, 11 etc., or the symbol of God's disciplinary and punitive justice, typifying the divine jealousy and wrath. God appears in fire for judgment, Dan. 7, 9; Ez. 1, 13; 27; Rev. 1, 14. Fire typifies the fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries, Hebr. 10, 27. He who in righteousness doth judge and make war has eyes as a flame of fire, Rev. 19, 11-12. So Delitzsch concludes correctly, the burning thornbush symbolized the people of Israel burning in the fire of tribulation, in the iron furnace of Egypt. Yet the bush is not consumed, for Jehovah is in the fire, who indeed disciplines his people, but does not give them over unto death, Ps. 118, 18. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has come to deliver his people from the oppression of Egypt. Israel's suffering is due to Pharaoh, but in reality its fire of affliction was kindled by the Lord for the purifying of his people, to prepare them for their great calling. That burning bush reveals God as a jealous God, Deut. 4, 24, who visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the chil-

dren to the third and fourth generation, and shows mercy unto thousands of them that fear and love him and keep his commandments. The revelation in the flaming bush goes beyond Israel's present condition under the afflictions in Egypt; it is the prelude to the covenant soon to be established here on Mt. Sinai, and symbolizes the relation into which he is about to enter with his people in that covenant. That is the reason why this place at the foot of Horeb is chosen for this manifestation to Moses. And he who purifies his people and is ready to establish his covenant and law in their minds, will, as a consuming fire, take vengeance upon Israel's foes. Pharaoh shall be crushed, and with an outstretched arm the Lord will lead his people hither to this mountain, that they may covenant to be his people, and he to be their God.

3. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

4. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am* I. **5. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground.**

6. Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

The impulse of Moses is entirely natural. The verb, from *sur*, indicates that the "great sight" appeared to one side of the valley, probably a little ways up on higher ground. The expression **great sight** really means "great vision," and seems to indicate that Moses, when he turned aside to get a closer view, perceived at once that this was something supernatural. It was then that God called to him **out of the midst of the bush**, and *thawek*, const. *thok*, seems to indicate that the thornbush was quite

a mass, with a great flame of fire burning in the middle of it. Where a moment ago we read the Angel of *Yahveh*, we now read *'Elohim* in a way which plainly identifies the two. The God of infinite majesty and might is the unchanging Lord of the covenant of grace. — The repetition of the call **Moses, Moses!** should be noted, as when coming from God or Christ it always indicates grace, viz. Matth. 23, 37; Luke 10, 41; etc. The reply of Moses: **Here am I**, consists of the interjectional *hinneh* with the suffix: "Behold me." It is the answer of willingness to hear. Merely the facts are recorded, not the feelings and thoughts of Moses on hearing his name thus called out of the fire. — The command for Moses to remove (*nashal*) his sandals, because **the place whereon thou standest is holy ground**, becomes clear when we recall that orientals always remove their sandals on entering sacred places, for instance Brahmins on entering a pagoda, Moslems on visiting a mosque, Arabs, Samaritans, etc. Greek priests perform their rites barefoot. The dust carried on sandals from without profaned such places considered sacred. How far back this custom goes our text indicates. The presence of God in the burning bush made the ground around it holy in a very real sense. Moses was to feel that, and the outward act of standing barefoot was to be for him the expression of his inward humility in the presence of God. For the command really meant an announcement of the Lord's presence. — **Moreover** is just the usual connective now ushering in the full revelation of him who had come to deal with Moses. **I the God of thy father** would be very strange, if it meant the natural father of Moses; for how could he, a plain Israelite, be paralleled with the great patriarchs? Keil explains it as a reference to the three patriarchs combined, as in 18, 4, each one of them having received in an immediate manner the promise of the Seed for all Israel. Perhaps it is

simpler to explain the singular "thy father" as a reference to Abraham alone, who first received the covenant and promise from God. The following ap-
position, naming the three patriarchs in order, elu-
cidates by mentioning those significant names what
"the God of thy father" means to convey.—Every
time a possessive is added to '*Elohim* that possessive
adds the idea of grace to the native meaning of power
inherent in '*Elohim*, and the sense is: the God of
majesty and might whose great power is graciously
exerted in behalf of the person or persons named by
the possessive. In naming **Abraham** etc. this is the
full covenant grace embodied in the promise of the
Seed, i. e. the Messiah. Let us note that here the
Logos himself, the Son equal with the Father, who
himself would come to earth in the Incarnation as
the Messiah, addresses Moses, and that in carrying
forward the great plan which would eventuate in his
great saving Mission in the fulness of time. Here
was one of his goings forth of old, Micah 5, 2 etc.,
denied by von Hofmann and others who follow his
perversion in Arian fashion, but attested all through
the Old Testament, as also in our text. This revela-
tion is the center of our text. Its sense is, and Moses
is to know it, that '*Elohim*, the God of infinite
might, who by his covenant graciously connected him-
self with Israel through the patriarchs of old, will
most certainly abide by that covenant, and will shape
and guide all things by his divine power and grace
to fulfill that covenant in time and in eternity. He
is the same God still, *our* God through Jesus Christ,
and all the covenant grace and blessing is over us now
and will continue to the end.—The mighty announce-
ment overwhelmed Moses, so that **he hid his face**,
covering it with his robe and arms; **for he was
afraid to look upon God**, he a sinful man fearing
death in the presence of the holy God. 1 Kgs. 19, 12.
The full realization of what the vision meant had

burst upon Moses in that announcement of God, and his involuntary action showed it. What follows is not a part of our text, which means that we, too, are to center our thoughts upon this great Epiphany of God, so that our hearts bow before him in realizing his might and his grace — we the more since we have long known the still fuller Epiphanies that followed.

SUGGESTIONS

Luther has a sermon on this text, but for Easter Tuesday, with the theme: *When Moses Saw the Fiery Bush*. I. He beheld Christ in his two natures; II. He beheld Christ's passion and glorification; III. He beheld both by faith in the Word. The divine nature is shown from v. 6, the human is pictured by the bush. The passion is in the burning, and the glorification in not being consumed. The place was holy because of the Word, and so is every church where the true Word is; to take off the shoes is to put away the old Adam, to recognize, accept, and believe the Word. All this, while in part allegorical, is well done, plain and effective, without straining, and stimulating to faith. — Koegel, another pulpit master, has the theme: *Jehovah's Glory in the Fiery Bush*. This glory is 1) an altar flame, demanding worship; 2) a refining fire, purging away impurities; 3) the light of life, in whose light God's people gather. Koegel, however, uses v. 1-15.

The way to preach on this text is to draw from it the points that are vital in the revelation which God here made of himself to Moses. We note the significance of the possessives with Elohim, and combined with this the full covenant name and the title, Angel of the Lord. Secondly, the bush, and this burning with a great flame, yet not consumed; all evidently symbolic and full of promise. Finally, the call to Moses, the removal of his sandals, and his recognition of God in holy fear and reverence. This gives us the following:

The Epiphany of God's Glory in the Burning Bush.

- I. *A manifestation full of power and grace.*
- II. *A manifestation rich in promise and assurance.*
- III. *A manifestation to be received in humility and faith.*

One more outline may suffice:

When God Drew Nigh to Moses in the Fiery Bush.

He came: — 1) As the Angel of Jehovah; 2) As the God of the covenant; 3) With the symbol of purification and preservation; 4) To carry forward his plan of salvation; 5) For us to bow before his holiness and might, and accept his grace by faith.

THE LENTEN CYCLE

SEPTUAGESIMA

Jer. 9, 23-24

This Sunday opens the Lenten cycle, the season called Passiontide. While Ash Wednesday, the Wednesday before Invocavit, ushers in the Passion season proper, the three preceding Sundays are Lenten in character, since they face away from Epiphany and look toward Good Friday. They are, we may say, the introduction to the Passion Season. — A study of the texts herewith presented shows that the series does not attempt to parallel either the corresponding old gospel texts or the Eisenach gospel line, and thus differs from the Epiphany line which parallels the old gospels. Yet three of our Old Testament texts, namely those for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday, remind us of the old gospels, because the significance of these three days is so marked. Aside from this the line is selected in an independent way. It is well to recall that in the arrangement of the Passion season the Sundays are not included in the forty days called Lent, their festive character derived from the Easter day of resurrection being retained. So the Passion proper is not treated in any series of Sunday text, but is left for the special week-day services. While we have two texts which refer plainly to the Savior's death (Invocavit: Isaac offered; Judica: the brazen serpent), these are not intended as passion texts, but as proper links in the chain for this Lenten series. — The general theme for the entire season is **Man's Sin and God's Atoning Grace**, and the different texts in their order develop this theme, not in any historical, or dogmatical, or even formal way, but so that all the essential features

embraced in this theme are presented one after the other, omitting none. The order is logical indeed, but uses the logic of God's grace and our soul's need, rather than the logic of our mere intellect and thinking. — Thus the cycle opens with its three pre-Lenten texts, which constitute a general call for *repentance*. The burden of these three is: Glory not in self, but in the Lord's mercy (Septuagesima, Jer. 9, 22-23); for when he withdraws his Word (Sexagesima, Amos 8, 11-12); what is left but the lies and vacuity of unbelief (Quinquagesima, or Estomihi, Jer. 8, 4-9). The effect of these three texts should be to drive us to God's mercy (Septuagesima) in his Word (Sexagesima) in true faith (Quinquagesima). — The Passion season proper begins with *Christ's sacrifice and atonement*, for *Invocavit*, as also it is to end with the Old Testament picture of the Suffering Savior, on Good Friday. The text is the offering of Isaac, Gen. 22, 1-14. — Besides this is placed *Reminiscere* with *Jehovah's glory in preaching his grace and mercy*. It is this incomprehensible grace and mercy which offered the Son for our sin. The text is Moses' asking to see God's glory, Ex. 33, 17-23. — Besides this grace and in glaring contrast to it, comes *Oculi*, and shows us *man's murderous sin*. It is fully exhibited in Israel, always bent on killing its prophets, and thus bound to murder even the Son himself at last. The text is Jeremiah almost slain, Jer. 26, 1-15. — *Laetare* rings out joyously with its text on *the salvation wrought by the Lord and sent out through his messengers*. Thus in the middle of this holy season salvation is set directly over against sin. The text is Isaiah's proclamation: "How beautiful are the feet . . . all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God," Is. 52, 7-10. — Now comes *Judica* calling to the stricken sinners to believe. It is the proper thought for this place, and the text is the brazen serpent upon which whoever looked was healed,

Num. 21, 4-9. — Palm Sunday shows us *the blessed King of salvation*, from Zech. 9, 8-12: "Thy king cometh unto thee." — Maundy Thursday has the Psalm of praise 111, with the significant line on *the remembrance of the Lord's wonderful works*, which recalls Christ's word in the Lord's Supper: "This do in remembrance of me." This text is not treated in this volume. — Finally, the climax on Good Friday, the Old Testament prophecy of *the suffering and dying Savior*, as depicted in the agonizing words of Ps. 22, 2-20. — There are those who lay no stress on correlating the texts in this or any other cycle or series, preferring to pick up each text as it comes, and preaching on it what their study of it may be able at the time to bring forth. It is the easier way, certainly, and for that very reason just as certainly the less fruitful. The general bearing of some texts is indeed quite obvious, and any fair amount of study will produce an acceptable sermon. We have such texts here: Isaac offered; the brazen serpent; "thy king cometh"; and Ps. 22. But there are other texts here, a number of them, which without careful study and correlation in advance, will simply puzzle the preacher when he reaches them, so that he will either drop the text because unable to do anything worth while with it, or labor at it like Peter fishing all night and catching nothing. Correlate every cycle! Put the necessary labor on this part of the work. It will put real point into every sermon, because it will discover the real pith in every one of the texts. Those whose message is obvious at once will gain, becoming more obvious still, and yielding an even stronger sermon. And the less obvious texts will rise out of the fog of strangeness and pointlessness, like peaks in a mountain range clear in the full sunlight at last. No cycle in this series is jumbled together or loosely strung together. Each is a strand of pearls, one gem placed beside the other because it properly fits the place. Deal with

each cycle on this high level, and your labor will not be in vain in the Lord.

Concerning Jeremiah and his work see the introduction to The First Sunday in Advent. Our text is from the first portion of Jeremiah's book, embracing chapters 2-20, warnings and rebukes uttered during the reign of king Josiah. The nation with its king had forsaken the Lord, practiced idolatry openly and became morally more and more degraded. Jeremiah's work was to expose and castigate this godlessness and wickedness unsparingly, to announce Judah's rejection and the impending calamity, to call, even though vainly, for the true repentance, and to hold out a promise of a better future for the repentant remnant. Our text occurs in the prophet's third address, chapters 7-10, in which Judah is warned not to trust in the Temple and sacrifices, for the nation would be cast out among the Gentiles and the whole land given over to ruin. The prophet scores the incorrigible wickedness of the people, proclaims the true wisdom they should follow, and sets over against that the utter folly of their idolatry. That true wisdom is briefly, yet effectively, propounded in the two verses which constitute our text. Their theme is: *Glory not in self, but in God.*

23. Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches.
24. But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

The claim that these two verses are not connected in their thought either with what precedes or with what follows is superficial. The prophet here states summarily in what true wisdom consists. This he

was obliged to do, if only for this reason, that in the previous part of his address he had referred twice to the false wisdom boasted of by the leaders of the people. In 8, 8 we hear them saying: "We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us." But Jeremiah is forced to say: "Lo, certainly in vain he made it; the pen of the scribes is in vain," for these boasting scribes perverted God's Word and thought that was wisdom. And again the prophet writes 9, 12: "Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the Lord hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?" There was no such truly wise man, the Lord had to say: "They have forsaken my law." Thus it was certainly very much in order for the Lord and Jeremiah to state clearly and succinctly in what the true wisdom consists; and that they do in the two verses of our text. This, of course, is no new wisdom, the law had proclaimed it all along. But Judah and her leaders rejected it and followed a wisdom of their own. Therefore, v. 25 etc. very properly goes on with the announcement of judgment. — The claim that the verses of our text are a disconnected insert because their tone is calm and quiet, is still weaker. Jeremiah may express his sorrow over the impending judgment and death in dramatic fashion, but when he delivers the Lord's own statement regarding the true wisdom, that of necessity cannot be in any dramatic fashion; one expects it to be calm. So we conclude that these verses are entirely proper in their place.

Again and again the prophet assures his hearers and readers: **Thus saith the Lord.** Sometimes he varies the formula. It is used to preface distinct and important parts of the messages he was called on to deliver to Judah. The people are to know always that not the prophet alone, but the Lord himself is

addressing them. They are dealing with the Lord, not with his humble instrument. They are receiving the Lord's Word, not the prophet's opinion or wisdom. For the different extended addresses a fuller preamble is used, and one not embodied in the message itself, and hence not uttered to the people, but set down in the written record of the different messages: "The word of the Lord came to me, saying," 2, 1; or with slight variation: "The word that came to Jeremiah, saying," 7, 1; see the headings of the six messages which comprise the first grand part of Jeremiah's book. Accordingly, our text is marked as one of the statements which the Lord utters to his people. — It is the LORD, *Yahveh*, their unchanging covenant God, who thus speaks to them. That title "LORD" is a call for them to hear and heed, for they are to be his covenant people. If they break his covenant, he as the covenant Lord must tell them the consequences. In fact, if he did not do so, he would not be carrying out his covenant duty. Likewise, he must tell them how to act as his covenant people; that too is his covenant duty. And every time the prophet says: "Thus saith the Lord," the words that follow are the Lord's own words, as if his own mouth were speaking them to the people. Many times, too, the following words are spoken in the first person. All this is nothing less than Verbal Inspiration, and actually in the directest form. The mouth or pen of the prophet is merely the human instrument through which the Lord speaks. This is *the fact in the case*; there is no theory about it at all. *How* the Lord is able to use a man's mouth or pen thus we need not explain, *that* he did so is just a fact and nothing more. To call it "mechanical" and thus to deny the fact, is contradicting the Lord himself. Facts are often slandered, but are never thereby abolished, except in the vacuous mind of the slanderer. In our human way we may use figures to illustrate the fact

to our own minds. Our fathers did that when they said it was like a dictation, or like the plectrum striking the strings of the lyre, or like a player blowing a flute. It is another slander to charge the fathers, because they used such figures, with setting up a "dictation theory." No figure is a theory. Up to this day we have found no better figures than these to illustrate the fact that is uttered in "Thus saith the Lord." If any man can find a better figure for the fact mentioned, let him state it, and all will thank him for the improvement in illustration. Just as one never gets rid of a fact by slandering it, so he never gets rid of it by slandering the apt illustrations used to make the fact clear. Efforts to do either only show that the man making them is using illegitimate means; they stamp him for what he is, a theological crook. And the fake means he uses to get rid of a plain divine fact show that his effort is miserably cheap. It is ludicrous for a man to wave a shallow opinion of his own at a divine (or even human) fact, and then imagine he has wiped the fact out of existence.

The divine statement which now follows in the two verses of our text can be summarized under the term *true wisdom*, for it is wisdom indeed to glory not in ourselves, but solely in the Lord. This is plain from v. 24, where the two terms "understand and know" are used. There is a negative and a positive side to the true wisdom, the one involving the other. The negative is mentioned first, because the leaders of Judah thought themselves wise in their spurious wisdom which was folly. Over against this the Lord defines the positive side of true wisdom, which to them appeared as folly. The wisest man in the world is he who glories not in his own wisdom, might, and riches, but in the Lord, and his grace, judgment, and righteousness. Conversely, the biggest fool in the world is he who glories in himself, and not in the Lord. While thus wisdom is made the controlling

thought, we might also make might or riches the angle of view. The weakest man in the world is he who trusts in his own wisdom, might, and riches, and not in the Lord's grace, judgment, and righteousness; while the strongest man in the world is he who does the reverse. The richest man in the world is again he who trusts not himself, but the Lord; and the poorest wretch, he who does the reverse. — **Let not the wise glory in his wisdom, *yithhallel*,** the imper. hithpael from *halal*, reflexive: "boast himself," with *b^e* indicating the sphere of action. Both terms, **the wise**, and **his wisdom**, are used in the widest sense, to embrace everything that passes as wisdom among men, adjudged such by them, not by the Lord. Any philosophy of life, and religious convictions, any course of conduct or mode of life, evolved by man himself, or derived from men, is such "wisdom," in reality folly. So also all the individual acts, decisions, conclusions, arguments, deductions, advices, emanating from this source, however good and profitable, and even moral they seem, are "wisdom" in the sense of folly here meant. It may even use the Bible as support, as the wise men in 8, 8 who said: "The law of the Lord is with us." A sample of this wisdom is furnished by the politicians of Judah and their "devices" in 18, 18. So Caiaphas and the Sadducees and Pharisees thought themselves wise, scheming to maintain their power and place, and antagonizing Christ. Like these leaders are all the lesser fellows who look out for number one, pick up a scrap here and there from some bigger fool, and end as they do far away from the Lord. Counting their wisdom wise they trust in it. Trusting it they stake their lives and souls on it. They build on it as a sure foundation, while in truth it is nothing but sand. Great will be their fall. — This sham wisdom is put first, because in the lives of these wise men it is the controlling force. Parallel to it is the **mighty** and

his might. His may be physical strength, bravery, heroic deeds, or the power and rule over men. Ungodly men always strive to dominate and often succeed. They love to be called "great" and make others serve them. Fair means as well as foul are their stepping-stones. Success is their god. And they always love to boast of their achievements. Such men were the leaders of Judah in Jeremiah's time. They despised the power and influence of the prophet. He was nothing in their sight; they were ruling the nation. Lesser men emulated them, boasting of their lesser ability in the same way. It was the "might" of "the mighty" that brought God's Son to the cross, slew Stephen and James, scattered the church with persecution, and — wrecked Jerusalem and their nation. He that exalteth himself shall be abased. — The last in this hollow trio is **the rich** and **his riches.** In glittering procession "the rich" move through the Scriptures in passage after passage, namely they who boast of their riches, trust in riches as Jesus puts it, put this god mammon in place of the Lord, perhaps even outwardly, at least in their hearts. Think of "the rich fool" in the parable who died the night after making his ambitious plans; or of "the rich man" who fared sumptuously every day and finally lifted up his eyes in hell; or of the rich men whom James scores in his Epistle, bidding them howl, for their gold and silver was cankered, James 5, 1 etc. Not that they have gained their riches by dishonest means, or have abused their wealth in vicious ways. The fatal thing is already the love of money, which is the root of evil, as in the case of the very respectable rich young ruler who came to Jesus; or to trust in riches and forget the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Even the philanthropic use of riches for making a gilded name among men is the glorying here warned against by the Lord. To all these who thus are "rich" or who long for such "riches" is given

day by day the spectacle of the rich leaving **this world** as naked as they came into it, not a penny of all their riches belonging to them even legally the moment they close their eyes in death, and yet the warning spectacle, like the Lord's warning Word to them, is wholly in vain. — These three are enough, though all the gifts and possessions of men, whatever they may be, belong in the same category. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" 1 Cor. 4, 7. On wisdom Paul writes: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men." 1 Cor. 3, 18-21. And again: "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 2 Cor. 10, 17.

Ki 'im is strongly adversative, **but**, in the sense of "on the contrary." **Let him that glorieth glory**, the imperfect and the participle of the hithpael placed side by side, emphasize the idea of glorying. Its sphere: **in this**, *b'zoth*, is explained by the absolute infinitives: **that he understandeth**, the hiphil from *sakal*, **and knoweth me**, the kal from *yada'*. This is wisdom, might, and riches all in one. The first infinitive signifies "to show good sense," or real insight. The implied contrast is that the wise of this world lack real sense, which is a fact. Sham wisdom is just nothing but folly — a thing to be ashamed of and of which one ought to repent. If one glories, let him do so by selecting the right sphere, namely real sense and understanding. — The second infinitive goes farther, for *yadda'* is like the Greek γινώσκειν, knowledge involving a personal relation of the one who knows to the person known,

noscere cum affectu et effectu. See Cremer, *Bibl.-theol. Woerterbuch d. neutest. Graezitaet*, on this verb and its Hebrew equivalent. "Knoweth me" is far more than intellectual knowledge, which merely cries: "Lord, Lord," and then is answered by the Lord: "I never knew you." We may call it heart-knowledge, or the knowledge of living experience. It tastes and sees how good the Lord is. It is the knowledge of faith and love. Thus the first infinitive is broader, and this second one more specific and explicit. — Still "knoweth me" is so compact and contains so much, that it needs unfolding and elaboration. Hence the clause with *ki*, which here must signify **that**, not "because." To know him, he declares, means to know **that I am the LORD, Yahveh**, the God of the covenant unchanging for ever. But here again everything is compressed in the one word *Yaveh*, so at once the participial clause is added: **which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth**, really: "the one exercising" etc. The verb *'asah* means "to make," here in the sense "to carry out," accomplish, fulfill. Jehovah is active in *grace*, etc. His work on earth, when done, is a complete and perfect exhibition of his *chesed*, **lovingkindness**, grace, favor, the German *Huld*; etc. — Three terms are here paralleled: **lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness**. The latter two are frequently combined; *misphath*, a judicial act, or judicial verdict, and *ts^edaqah*, the active attribute of justice, or divine right. But the order of the three is significant: grace comes first, the undeserved favor extended to sinners to pardon their guilt and lift them by repentance and faith back into the covenant and communion with God. This favor always includes the atonement for sin provided by God himself to be applied to the sinner's guilt. On this atonement, made the sinner's own, the pardon rests. During the old covenant this atonement was present in types and figures connected with

the promise of the Messiah. By faith in it men were justified and saved. — On “grace” rest “judgment and righteousness,” namely the judicial act or verdict (*mishphat*) of the Lord, and the divine right or justice (*ts^edaqah*) inherent in his being and manifested in his every word and act. Thus when a man accepts the grace, the judicial verdict of the Lord is acquittal; and this is in perfect accord with the Lord’s justice, all claims against the sinner in question having been perfectly satisfied in the Lord’s court. On the other hand, when grace is spurned in impenitence and unbelief, when a man’s guilt is uncovered in the Lord’s sight, then the verdict of his judgment must be: Guilty! And that again is in most perfect accord with the Lord’s own norm of right or justice. It is thus that the three terms here in their necessary order fit together. The view which dissociates grace from judgment and righteousness, making the one merely the opposite of the other two, and applying grace to the saved and judgment and righteousness to the lost, is a serious error. God does not deal thus diversely with men, showing grace only to some, and justice only to others. His grace is over all, and his judgment and righteousness follow this grace, to acquit in righteousness those who are won by his grace, and to condemn in righteousness those who reject his grace. — What the Lord thus states Jeremiah is to proclaim to the men of Judah. It is the true wisdom for them. The Lord will so deal with them, and blessed are they who know it aright. But all this applies to men generally, hence the significant addition: **in the earth**. We may not be able now to determine just how the Lord actually proceeds in exercising grace, judgment, and righteousness upon the different nations and the many individuals involved. One thing we dare not do, unless we would court the error of Calvinism, and that is to interpret the *voluntas signi* by means of the *voluntas beneplaciti*,

i. e. to interpret what the Lord positively says in his Word by what we think we see him doing in his acts. That is how Calvin concluded that God never intended to show grace and to save certain men; that is how he limited the atonement to the elect and shut out the non-elect by an absolute decree. — Combining aright “grace, judgment, and righteousness,” we see how the Lord can, and in fact must, add: **for in these things I delight.** The verb *chaphats* means “to have pleasure”; it is the εὐδοκία and εὐδοκεῖν of the New Testament, and as Cremer states always denotes the free will of God the content of which is something good, Eph. 1, 5 and 9; Matth. 11, 26; Luke 2, 14; 10, 21; Phil. 2, 13. “I delight” and “good pleasure” dare never be read in the sense of absolute will or determination in God, which again is Calvinism, and needs only the idea of “judgment and righteousness” by such an absolute will irrevocably allotted to certain men from eternity, to make it complete. — In **saith the LORD** we have the formula *n'um-Yaveh*, “report or revelation of Jehovah,” nearly always appended at the end of a statement or inserted, but seldom placed at the head. Here it seals the statements of Jehovah just uttered or recorded. The expression reads exactly as does “Thus saith the Lord” at the beginning of the statement, i. e. as the Lord’s own utterance, not as an assurance merely added by the prophet. We cannot read either of them as merely indicative of “strong prophetic consciousness” on the part of Jeremiah. This is a half-truth, put out for the purpose of supporting a low view of Inspiration and abolishing the idea of Verbal Inspiration. Certainly, Jeremiah was fully conscious of his prophetic calling, but he was conscious of it because the Lord himself spoke to him word for word, and even told him that he, the Lord, was thus speaking. And all that Jeremiah did, was to repeat and deliver each message word for word as given to him, to the people for whom these words were

intended, and then to dictate them to his servant and scribe Baruch to have them preserved word for word for all future ages. This is the fact, and as such it will stand for ever.

SUGGESTIONS

This text is typical in presenting first a negative, secondly a positive side. Anyone with half an eye can see a sermon might be constructed on this text, presenting first the negative side, secondly the positive. Even a man like Ohly does that: I. How well founded the warning against false glorying; II. How well founded the admonition to true glorying. And strange to say, he puts these parts under a theme which really covers only part two, namely *Soli Deo Gloria*. But it will always remain true, that main divisions of any discourse, sermons included, split into negative and positive, or vice versa, are cheap, require no brains to make, count on no brains on the part of those for whom made, present nothing interesting, and are tried only by beginners in seminaries until told better. Let these remarks suffice on all texts of this type, and on all divisions of this kind. — Far better than to split horizontally into two parts, one negative and one positive, is the split vertically down through the parts, making each one of them state a positive thought together with its corresponding negative, or vice versa. Kahnis affords an example:

As Christians, Value

- I. *Not the earthly wealth you have, but the Lord as the true riches.*
- II. *Not our own wisdom, but the knowledge of the Lord.*
- III. *Not our own might, but the Lord who is mighty in us.*

A still better example is that furnished by Schmidt, better because it contains beside the positive and negative idea a pleasing and interesting paradox in the second member of each part:

The True Knowledge of The Lord Destroys All Vain Glorying in Self.

- I. *Only by his grace is our poverty made riches.*
- II. *Only by his power is our weakness made might.*
- III. *Only by his light is our folly made wisdom.*

As we must advise against a bare positive and negative division, for the reasons stated, so we must advise against a division wholly negative even when dressed up like the one by Zapf:

Man's Poorest Supports in Cases of Need.

- I. *Human wisdom, for in case of need it knows nothing.*
- II. *Human might, for in case of need it effects nothing.*
- III. *Human wealth, for in case of need it furnishes nothing.*

It will not do to say that the positive side will be taken care of in the elaboration. That may be, but when theme and main parts are wholly negative the effect of the sermon as such is negative. And yet every sermon should be strongly positive in effect. — It is far better to use the positive form, like Langsdorff:

Let Him That Gloried Glory in The Lord.

1) *That is true wisdom;* 2) *True might;* 3) *True Riches.*
And there will be no trouble in dealing with the negatives in the elaboration.

But all the outlines quoted thus far take their cue from the negatives in v. 23, and make prominent human wisdom, might, and riches. None of them deal with the three positives in v. 24, the Lord's lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness. At best they supply only the corresponding positives for the human negatives in v. 23, namely divine wisdom, might, and riches. And yet in a text like this v. 24 is most weighty, in which the things of the Lord dominate. V. 23 with its human negatives is only the foil for v. 24. In other words, the cheaper, commoner thoughts of human wisdom, might, and riches, these ordinary categories of worldly success, are allowed in the sermon to overshadow the deeper and far more vital thoughts of the Lord's lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness. That really reveals a lack in penetrating to the heart of the text, which lies in what v. 24 reveals. A division which grapples with these supreme features of the text will necessarily be synthetical, and may even on the basis of this synthesis rise to still higher levels. Here is an effort: — As we turn from the golden Epiphanies of the Lord and begin to look toward dark Calvary and the Cross, let the Lord's call ring through our hearts:

Understand and Know That I Am The Lord!

- I. *Know that I exercise lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness.* (Grace; its plan; atonement; justification by faith, and its opposite for unbelief.)
- II. *Know with heart-knowledge.* (The Lord exercises grace, etc.; to know is to experience, which means faith, life, inner contact and realization.)
- III. *Know so that the true effects appear.* (So that self-glorying disappears, and glorying in what the Lord delights in fills the heart completely.)

Here is another in similar manner, starting from another angle:

Delight in What Delights The Lord!

- I. *In his lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness.*
- II. *By truly knowing and understanding.*
- III. *So that your glorying is all in the Lord.*

These divisions cling closely to the terms used in the text itself, and thus naturally call for an expository sermon, in which these terms are fully explained, and then applied, i. e. in the higher form of application which is akin to appropriation and often melts into it. Somewhat less close to textual terms, yet expository in the richest way is the following, which attempts to reach a little higher in form: Sordid, empty lives — some earthly poor, some with earthly glamor. Yet there is a higher life. It may be lowly measured by earth; it may be set high in earthly power and place. This is the life we all can have, should have, must have. Let us call it by its right name. It is

The Life Glorious.

- I. *Lit by the Lord's lovingkindness (grace, etc.).*
- II. *Exalted in the Lord's judgment (justification).*
- III. *Shining in the use of the Lord's gifts (even the earthly: wisdom, might, riches, put into his service).*
- IV. *Radiating the Lord's praise (worship, glorying only in the Lord).*

SEXAGESIMA

Amos 8, 11-12

The book of Amos is like the thunder of the Lord's voice. A terrific storm is gathering to burst over Israel. In the prophecies of Amos we see the lightnings flash hither and thither, from one people to another and finally center upon the kingdom of the ten tribes, namely Israel. This people shall be smitten and crushed by the irrevocable judgment. Only at the end of these terrible pronouncements, in comparatively few words, the hopeful ray of the sun of grace breaks through the storm-clouds, promising a new era in the far distance.

Amos means "burden," and a heavy burden indeed this prophet brought upon obdurate Israel. The man himself was a poor shepherd and gatherer of sycamore figs. Those who think he owned flocks or a fig orchard put into the terms by which Amos describes himself what they do not contain. He was not a prophet by profession and had never attended a school of prophets, 7, 11. He lived as a herder among the herdsmen of Tekoa not far from Bethlehem in Judah, and without any preparation or training the Lord took him and sent him to Bethel, twelve miles north of Jerusalem in the kingdom of Israel there to prophesy against Israel. It was in the time of Jeroboam II., the grandson of Jehu, between the years 810 and 783 B. C. Bethel, "the king's chapel," "the king's court," was the seat of the infamous calf-worship, an idolatrous perversion of the worship of Jehovah. More altars, beside the original one, were erected at this time, rich summer and winter houses for the king's notables, even houses decorated with ivory. Here in

the very seat of haughty godlessness and idolatry Amos delivered his message announcing the Lord's judgment and the nation's destruction.

Our text is from the last section of these prophecies, chapter seven to the end. Five symbolic visions are given the prophet to see and to communicate, and each is explained. They close with the announcement that the tabernacle of David shall again be raised up. Our text is part of the explanation of the vision of the basket of summer fruit, which symbolized that Israel's end has come, 8, 1, for the people were ripe for the judgment. The terrors of the end are then pictured in dramatic fashion. When Amos was through in Bethel, failing to elicit repentance by his message, he retired to Judah and there most likely put his prophecies into permanent written form.

The northern kingdom under Jeroboam II. was at the height of its power, its borders having been extended as never before or after. But luxury, pleasure, pride, moral corruption, and pagan forms of worship flourished, suppressing any godly vestiges left among the people. These prideful, self-sufficient, greedy leaders of the people, their wicked main priest Amaziah, and all their corrupt following, the simple herdsman from Tekoa faced in the name of the Lord. When finally his silence was demanded, 7, 12-13, after he had foretold the king's own violent death and the nation's exile, he stood unmoved and drove his terrible indictment home just as sternly as before. Like ripe summer fruit which must soon be eaten, so Israel's end is impending. And when that day arrives and its terrors strike home in the hearts of this people, they who have long spurned the Word that was sent to them, will be struck with dismay and despair, and then, when too late, they will seek the Word, but vainly, for they shall not find it. This is the "burden" our text sets before us in warning. — There are just two verses, apparently to match the two verses of the

previous text. But these two pairs of verses are opposites. The chief thought in the two for Septuagesima is the knowledge of the Lord and salvation; that of the two for Sexagesima is the punitive withdrawal of all saving knowledge. Yet withal the second text is an advance upon the first. In the first the substance is offered us as such, while in the second "the Word of the Lord" as containing that substance is made prominent. For to understand and know the Lord always in what he does for and in us, is to have his Word. When that is gone there is no more hope of finding the Lord, reaching his grace, or winning salvation.

11. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: 12. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

This is what the basket of summer fruit means: the Lord God will withdraw his Word from Israel. It is part of the comprehensive judgment expressed in the words: "The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more," namely with my judgment so as to spare them, v. 2. Or, as v. 7 puts it: "I will never forget any of their works," i. e. never pardon and thus never forget them. The withdrawing and permanent withholding of God's Word always means judgment and doom. And this record of it is set down for our warning that we may repent of all our sins while there is time. — **Behold, hinneh**, demands attention for the importance and gravity of what is to be said. **The days come, yamim ba'im** (from *bo'*), as in 4, 2; 9, 13, is the prophetic expression for definite days seen in the future, and usually the expression signifies days filled

with evil and punishment. Those days are like an hostile army marching, and the prophet announces their arrival. — Here again the simple fact is stated for the assurance of the men of Israel, that what the prophet tells them is the Lord's own message. **Saith the Lord** GOD, with *n'um*, is usually an insert in the sentence as here, or placed at the end, and is not used as a preamble. These Israelites are not dealing with Amos, but with '*Adonay Yahveh*, with him who has all power and rules over all, and yet is in covenant relation with them unchanging for ever. This mighty and gracious Being is giving them through the instrumentality of a humble herdsman his *n'um*, "unveiling," drawing the curtain aside and letting them see what their godlessness in falling from his covenant is preparing for them in the days that are approaching. The head priest of the calf-worship at Bethel may not like this revelation and may try to rid himself of the prophet, 7, 12-13, yet closing heart and ears against what God unveils is nothing but the height of folly. — In Amos we see a case somewhat like that of the fishermen whom Jesus chose to transmit his revelation. Only Amos was without any learning and taken just as he was. God made him see and hear just what he was to tell. That was Revelation combined with Inspiration. Note that through the mouth of Amos God is speaking in the first person. That is Verbal Inspiration in directest form. God used mind, heart, and mouth of the prophet. Amos knew what God was saying through his mouth, as well as the Israelites knew when he had said it. *How* the thing was done by God perhaps Amos himself could not have told us, but *that* God did it there was no shadow of doubt for him, as there should be none for us. Some of the things Amos was given to say went far beyond his comprehension. He had to search and study his own utterances, as Peter tells us the prophets generally did, 1 Pet. 1, 10-11, as to whatever

God was making known. He scanned and weighed each word and statement laid on his tongue. Whether God gave him in advance what he was to say, or whether it was given him at the moment when he said it, makes no difference. The words and expressions as well as the sense emanated miraculously from God, did not and could not come from Amos himself. They were not his reflections, reasonings, suppositions, or ideas. No simple herdsman was ever known to say of his own powers what this herdsman said, and then set it down in writing just as he had said it. It was God, the God who made this man, that used his person, mind, consciousness, faculties, and tongue, taking the whole man as he was, and using him as his instrument for conveying directly to Israel what he, the Lord Jehovah, wanted conveyed. This is the incontrovertible *fact* of prophetic verbal inspiration. It was perfect in its result — never a word too much or too little; never a wrong, misleading, faulty word; never an incorrect or erroneous statement. The inspired Word is infallible. If now some wise fellow thinks he has found an error, and advertises his supposed find to discredit Inspiration, or at least Verbal Inspiration, he simply exposes his own ignorance and foolish pride. We to-day, may not be able at once, or easily, to figure out some of these inspired statements, copyists of the written Word may have transcribed faultily here or there, that does not in the least change the fact of Verbal Inspiration as it lies before us on the sacred pages. Faith needs only that *fact*; it needs and wants no *theory* about it at all. — God's dread announcement is: **I will send a famine in the land.** He had already used physical hunger, "cleanness of teeth," namely nothing for the teeth to chew, "and want of bread in all your palaces" where the richest lived, 4, 6. Likewise God had used physical thirst, withholding rain from some cities and localities, 4, 7-8; and other punishments besides, 4, 9 etc. The

verb *shalach* means to send for a purpose, to commission. Since all these former punitive messengers found no response, God will commission the last, his herald, to announce final rejection. — **Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water** intends to convey far more than merely to compare the coming spiritual famine with some physical famine or other in order to show the greatness of the former by means of the comparison. These words remind obdurate Israel of the actual physical famines they have already suffered, the one to which Amos referred in 4, 6, and the great famine and drought in Ahab's time when Elijah demonstrated God to Israel on Mt. Carmel. Those former actual periods of famine thus make this new threat very real. — *Ki 'im* after a negative is adverbative, **but**, or "on the contrary." This shall be a **famine of hearing the words of the LORD**. In two ways this famine shall be different: 1) it shall be a far graver infliction; 2) it shall be the final infliction. Physical famine, like other chastisements, however painful and terrible, still indicated that the Lord had not broken off with his efforts to turn his people to repentance; but the famine of the Word denotes the final abandonment to judgment. The plural, "words of the Lord," differs but slightly from the singular used in v. 12. It suggests that the Lord has no more messages for the obdurate sinners, not a one, whether it be of this kind, or of some other kind. All are silent. And now the name *Yahveh* is used. The Lord of the covenant who changes not himself, and changes not the terms of his covenant once made, abides by those terms to the last. With his covenant broken and repudiated by those with whom it was made, there remains nothing for him as the covenant Lord but to act on its final proviso, which is to recognize the repudiation and send down the fatal judgment. Read these clauses of the covenant for instance in Deut. 6, 12 and 15; 8, 19-20; and Israel's acceptance of them in Josh.

1, 18. This part of the covenant is overlooked at times but it was always there, and Israel compelled the Lord to put this part into execution. Not that thus the old covenant proved a failure in the end. In the days of Elijah 7000 had not bowed the knee to Baal even in the northern kingdom. So a remnant always remained true. When the old covenant merged into the new, at the birth of the Messiah, some in Israel were found godly and true, and when Christ's work was finished there was a noble band of believers among the Jews who constituted the nucleus for the glorious new covenant. Even though the threat of the covenant must at last be carried into execution, its promise part, which is the heart of it, stands, finds true covenant members, and is carried to its glorious consummation.

On the famine of the Word as the mark of final judgment read Prov. 1, 24-31, and note: "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Compare Is. 1, 15; John 7, 34 and 8, 21 and 24; Gen. 6, 3. This seeking and hungering for the Lord and his Word is not due to repentance or to a readiness to repent at last. There is nothing spiritual or salutary back of it to which the Lord might yet respond. It is a crying for the mercy of the Lord under the stress of his stern judgments, blaming him to the last for thus crushing them and reproaching him for not giving them his Word still. Luther puts it thus: "He who will not have God's Word, he shall reach the point where he shall never more find it, though he would like to have it." Selnecker has the following: "This is a horrible threat, which for godly hearts makes their hairs stand on end and their skin creep. For to have the Word of God pure and clean is the highest treasure of all and the greatest gift in the world, without which treasure no man should seek to live, to say nothing of wishing to live. For what is man

who has not the Word of God by which he may know God's being and will? What is a man who does not believe in the Lord Christ and is no vessel of the Holy Ghost? What is a man who does not know that God is gracious to him for Christ's sake, and that he is a child and heir of God through Christ, and is to live in eternity? How blessed, and blessed again, are they who are able to hear God's Word, pure and clean, have the right use of the exalted Sacraments, receive therefrom fine, simple instruction, true faith, true comfort, attend to their calling, trust in God, be patient under their cross, and commend body and soul to God's gracious protection and help, and know that the holy angels are about them, guard and keep them against all the poisonous, fiery darts of wicked Satan. Truly, he who does not lead such a life should wish never to have been born, no matter how healthy, strong, rich, mighty and powerful he may possibly be. God help and enlighten us that our hearts may never experience this soul-hunger! O thou faithful Immanuel, Jesus Christ, abide with us, for the day is far spent, and the night is at hand. Seditions, sects, heresies, envy, hatred, presumption, security, and fleshly world-wisdom, all which spring from despising the holy Word and are full of ingratitude for thy benefits, will deprive us of the great treasure of thy Word and Sacraments. Spare thou us, faithful Savior, and let not us and our poor children and descendents live to see such woe, or take us in advance in blessedness to thee." And Tholuck adds: "These are Sabbath days when God hunts us up at home. But when a Sabbath day like that comes, and God condescends to us in the fulness of his grace, then woe to him who shuts the door. Love spurned avenges itself. He who makes his ear deaf to God's Word shall become actually deaf. That is the judgment contained in the word: from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath." It is only too true. The grace of God,

offered us so long and patiently by God, is not an old shoe-rag which we may kick again and again into the corner, and then in the hour of our extremity find ready to hand. Since grace is wholly underserved it lies with God alone how often or how long he will yet extend it when men spurn it. You need say no to the Word only once too often. He who strikes the bleeding hand of Christ extended to him in the Word, does not know whether when at last he frantically reaches out for it, he will not be grasping empty air[^] only.

Verse 12 describes in graphic fashion the desperate plight of the men of Israel when finally the Lord withdraws his grace and Word. **And they shall wander from sea to sea**, i. e. totter, grope around aimlessly, *na'u* from *nu'a*, faint, spent, helpless. No specific bodies of water are meant, but the sea as bounding the land. They shall run from one end to the world to the other. — **And from the north even to the east** is a simplified form for "from the north to the south, and from the west to the east." — The second half of the verse states more explicitly what the first half contains: They are seeking the Word: **they shall run to and fro**, i. e. roam around, **to seek the word of the LORD**. Jesus refers to this vain activity in Matth. 24, 26. The search here described is not a real search for the Word, i. e. a search prompted by a desire for what the Word really contains, namely the Law and the Gospel which work repentance, faith, and true obedience. Such a search the Lord himself starts in men's hearts by the call and offer of his grace and Word, and therefore always rewards it by a finding. This search is in vain: **and shall not find**. It is hopeless to begin with. For in the first place it is the effect of judgment and the terror it awakens, when the divine retribution strikes home. And in the second place, a search produced thus, seeks the Lord and his Word in a corresponding way, only to escape the terror. If judg-

ment were still withheld there would not be this search. It is like the imprisoned criminal who tries only to get out. It is called a search for the Word, only because these people to whom the Word was offered so long, know that there is such a thing, having heard of it. Thus even to the last their purpose is wrong, like that of Dives in hell who wanted Lazarus sent to his five brothers, just so that they should not get into hell also.

“The soul may do without everything, save the Word of God, and without the Word of God nothing avails. Truly, thou canst not read the Word of God too much, canst not read too well what thou redest, canst not understand too well what thou understandest, canst not believe too well what thou believest, and canst not live it too well. Therefore, we should let the apostles and prophets sit in their places, and should sit here at their feet and listen to what they say, but not say what they should hear.” Luther. Again he writes: “Buy while the market is at the door; gather in while the sun shines and the weather is fair; use God’s grace and Word while it is at hand. For this ye shall know: Word and grace are a quick shower, which passes, and comes not again where it fell. The Jews had it, but gone is gone, now they have it not. Paul brought it to the land of the Greeks, gone is gone, now they have the Turks. Rome and the land of the Latins have also had it, now they have the pope. And you Germans need not think that you will keep it for ever. For ingratitude and disregard will not let it remain. Therefore, grab and hold tight whoever is able to grab and hold, slothful hands are bound to get a bad year.” The sign-post whose pointing nobody follows will be taken down; the candle that nobody reads by will be blown out. “Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time, as it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” Heb. 3, 7.

SUGGESTIONS

In substance this text is negative, and therefore typical of its class. If now one should press the point of keeping strictly to the text, the resulting sermon would likewise be negative. Some few preachers, built on abnormal mental and spiritual lines, might consent to this. But the consensus of all well balanced students of preaching is, and ever will be, that the sermon must be at least in great part positive. Perhaps they would agree to the thesis: the general effect must be positive. But shall we then discard all negative texts? Shall we set up the preaching principle that a negative portion of Holy Writ is not fit to be used as a text? While that might simplify matters, it would certainly be going too far. The finest pericope systems show an occasional decidedly negative text, like the one before us. Well, then, some may say, we must discard the principle of sticking to the text. That again would be an easy way out, but the price would be out of proportion. While there are preachers enough who deal loosely with their texts, take all kinds of liberties with them, often use them as mere pretexts, and make nails of them on which to hang a lot of material not pertinent to them, but really impertinent, we who honor every text cannot consent to such impertinence. Preaching unfaithful to the text is inferior preaching. If men of ability descend to it, they discount their own ability. For all their ability they are unable where they should be able. The solution lies in a different direction. It is not even difficult when understood.

All divine truth has a double side. We have an example in the Septuagesima text, and in thousands of Biblical statements where beside positive statements the corresponding negatives are placed, and vice versa. To say truth means to say the opposite of lies. To make plain the idea of life we contrast it with the idea of death. To impress right, we condemn wrong. And so all along the line. Now reverse the operation. Sin is made plain by setting righteousness against it; hate, by comparing it with love; judgment, by its opposite, namely grace, pardon, justification. All preachers, many of them perhaps unconsciously, thus operate with the two natural and self-evident sides of the truth. Texts wholly positive in their statements seem to afford no difficulty. Even if only instinctively the preacher supplies in the sermon the necessary negatives that lie embedded in these positives. For instance, the preacher freely expounds to us that we must love our enemies, by telling us that means we dare not hate them. Well

now, why cannot the man do the reverse with equal naturalness? Suppose his text from beginning to end forbids certain kinds of wrong, the whole text being thus negative in form. If he expounds that text properly to his people, must he not tell them at length that this very text demands that we do the corresponding opposite right things? It certainly does. And so the entire problem, if ever it was such, of negative texts is solved.

Apply this to the text we have in hand. It is negative throughout. The terror of the judgment on the men of Israel is a negative thought in supreme degree, for this judgment is irrevocable and final on God's part. But we preachers are to say these words, not to the men of Israel who were beyond hope, but to our congregations who need this mighty warning, lest some fall into the same condemnation as Israel. Before Israel received this word of final judgment, it had the sweet word of grace and salvation. The famine for the Word of God cannot be understood without the implication of the preceding abundance of the Word of the Lord. Even for Israel the negative implied that positive. How much more for us who now are to hear this text, and who now sit in this abundance of divine grace with its offers of salvation. Therefore no man can rightly expound this text in a sermon unless he sets forth fully what precedes every famine of the Lord's Word of grace. Thus the positive element for the sermon comes out from under the negative form of the text.

In the old gospel text for this Sunday three kinds of soil are pictured which failed to produce fruit from the seed of the Word sown upon them, the hard wayside, the stony places, the ground full of thorns. Who would keep sowing good seed on such soil? He is bound to quit, to waste the good seed no longer. And when all the soil is like that, the Lord must withhold the good seed of his Word completely. That is exactly what happened in the wicked and obdurate land of Israel. The Lord sent upon that land and its people, in final judgment, as our text puts it, "a famine of hearing the words of the Lord." — How about our land? Hearts hard in unbelief; hearts shallow in sham belief; hearts full of the thorns of worldliness and care of earthly things unfit for any belief. How long shall God waste his precious Word on such a people? Do not help on your part by the disregard of the Word to hasten and extend the judgment that is already due. — An introduction like this may well lead up to a theme and division like the following from G. Mayer:

Lord, Take Not Thy Saving Word from Us!

Let us put into this prayer:

- I. *The confession of our past disregard of the Lord's Word.*
- II. *The vow henceforth to prize and obey the Lord's Word.*
- III. *The petition that we may never suffer a famine of the Lord's Word.*

The text centers in the one word "famine," so much so that the preacher may well put that word in the forefront and pivot his entire sermon on it. While in substance a negative term, denoting the withholding of the Word, it carries with it the strongest positive elements.

"I Will Send a Famine in The Land!"

- I. *Mark well what led up to it.*
 - 1) Long years of the Word.
 - 2) Constant efforts to make men hear.
 - 3) Obdurate refusal to hear.
- II. *See the full justice of it.*
 - 1) For the Lord to send his Word is the purest grace.
 - 2) For men to refuse the Word is the worst crime.
 - 3) In simple justice the Lord must cease to send his Word.
- III. *Heed well the warning in it.*
 - 1) What a blessing still to have the Word!
 - 2) What a calamity to lose the Word!
 - 3) What a call for us to prize, believe, and follow the Word!

We have often heard the Savior's call and promise: "Seek, and ye shall find!" But we ought to know that the same Lord also said: "Ye shall seek me, and not find me; for ye shall die in your sins." That call and promise is the voice of grace to the sinners it would save. The other announcement is the voice of judgment on the sinners that would not allow themselves to be saved. This second voice once spoke through the prophet Amos to the obdurate ten tribes of Israel:

Ye Shall Seek, and Shall Not Find.*I. Once seeking could have found.*

- 1) When grace invites, it would stir us up to penitent seeking.
- 2) That seeking is never without finding.
- 3) How blessed the treasures thus found!

II. Now seeking shall not find.

- 1) When judgment and penalties descend, impenitent sinners begin to run to and fro, but only to seek and find a way of escape.
- 2) That seeking cannot and shall not find what it seeks, for when judgment descends the way of escape is shut.
- 3) What terror in impenitent seeking, and in the growing realization that there is no escape!

III. Which seeking do you want for yourself?

- 1) One of the two is bound to be yours.
- 2) The devil deludes men to think they can refuse the first, and yet not be driven to the second.
- 3) The Lord himself warns you by the second to which Israel was driven, that you may take the first.
- 4) Shall there be any doubt which choice you will this day make?

The Great Silence.

I. The Word long despised. II. The Word completely withheld. III. Grace wholly come to an end. IV. Judgment alone left.—While the Word is still ringing in your ears, laboring to win and hold your hearts, think on “the great silence”.

QUINQUAGESIMA OR ESTOMIHI

Jer. 8, 4-9

The historical data for our text have been sketched in the introduction to the text for Septuagesima, Jer. 9, 23-24. That, as well as our present text, are taken from what is usually called Jeremiah's Temple Address, comprising chapters 7-10; for the Lord had ordered the prophet, 7, 2: "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word." — Amos spoke to Israel, Jeremiah here speaks to Judah. A glance at the context shows that our text is intended to complete the trio of this little pre-Lenten cycle: Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima. The entire text is summarized in the statement, v. 6: "No man repenteth him of his wickedness." We are here dealing with Judah's impenitence and unbelief; or, stating the contents more exactly, with Judah's *unreasonable obduracy*. The text itself is thus plainly negative in what it presents concerning the people of Judah in the period immediately preceding the exile; yet there lies embedded in this negative the powerful injunction for us not to follow Judah, but on our part to repent. As the Passion Season is about to open this call to repentance is certainly an appropriate and necessary sermon subject. Our whole nation with its irreligion, false and fake religions, disregard of the laws of God as well as of man, its crime, wickedness and rank worldliness, and its love of everything that hurts the soul, needs nothing more than the call to true repentance. And we who are in the church are to be the first ones who should thus repent and show the others the way. Even if none outside repent, we

ought to be the godly remnant that heeds the Lord's warning and call.

4. Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? 5. Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. 6. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

The indictment, beginning with chapter 7 and extending on up to our text, is quite complete. Judah is desperately wicked, flagrantly idolatrous, has refused its God, will refuse to hear also this warning from Jeremiah, and the divine judgment with all its terrors must descend. Yet there is one more item that must be taken care of in a case like this. All who know the Lord and his Word know that however numerous and grave sins may be, and however long people may have persisted in them, they may yet escape at the last by means of true repentance. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Is. 1, 18. This item in the case of Judah is now taken care of. The Lord orders Jeremiah to charge the people with perpetual and hopeless impenitence. They are wholly obdurate, and even cover their obduracy with lying wisdom.— **Moreover thou shalt say unto them** ushers in this new portion of the indictment against Judah, somewhat like 7, 28. In our text, however, it is made more emphatic by inserting the weighty preamble: **Thus saith the LORD**, namely *Yahveh*, who as the covenant God is now about to carry out the final stipulation attached to his covenant, that if his people repudiate

his covenant he will cast them off in fatal punishment. Just as all the previous words of this address are the very words of Jehovah, delivered by verbal Inspiration through the mind and mouth of Jeremiah, so also these words concerning Judah's obdurate impenitence are the Lord's very own. — The two questions which the Lord puts to the people through the prophet's mouth contain their self-evident answer. There is only one possible answer, i. e. only one natural, reasonable, sensible answer. And that answer, when applied to Judah, as the Lord does it in v. 5, completely condemns Judah. **Shall they fall, and not arise?** Has anybody ever heard of such a thing before? When people slip and fall down anywhere, the very first impulse is to get up on their feet again as quickly as possible. Whoever heard of anyone falling down, and then just lying there, and refusing ever to get up again? It would be insane to do such a thing. The plural in the verb is meant of an indefinite subject. The fact that here the plural is used, and in the next question the singular, is without significance, except that in the first question we are asked to think of a number of people who constitute a class, and in the second just one person as an example of the class. It ought to go too, without saying, that the falling here meant is just an ordinary fall, not one in which a person breaks a limb or otherwise hurts himself so that he cannot get up though he might try. — The second question has the same general sense, though it uses different imagery: **shall he turn away, and not return?** Suppose a person has made a wrong turn somewhere on the road, will he not, the moment his mistake is pointed out to him, retrace his steps? Has anyone ever heard of such a man just going on and on in the wrong direction? Can one imagine a thing so unnatural, so senseless? *Yashub* (from *shub*) is used in the natural double sense, first for turning away from the right course,

as a traveller making a wrong turn, and secondly for turning back from such a wrong course. The question is terse and compact, yet entirely clear in its meaning. We, of course, are to think of a traveller who is told that he has mistaken the road. And incidentally we may note that the verb *shub* is used regularly also for spiritual conversion, the turning of the heart from sin and guilt in true repentance to grace and pardon.

The application in v. 5 is simple and direct: **Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?** There is no reasonable explanation for this unreasonable act. So with all the unreason of sin, of persistence and obduracy in sin, of refusal to accept the Lord's grace and mercy. No rational explanation is possible for this irrational procedure. In the parables of Jesus this is brought out in two ways; once, when the sinner is confronted with his act, and remains dumb, and again when he puts up a sham excuse, and is at once condemned out of his own mouth. Read *Yerushalam* as an apposition to *ha'am hazzeh*, the demonstrative *zeh* with the article, and connect the feminine *shob'bah* with *Yerushalem*, which takes care of the gender. Jerusalem is the head of the nation, and thus designates the entire people of Judah. We may read *nitstsachath* with the old Jews as the feminine participle niph'al from *natsach* = made perpetual. Jerusalem turned (i. e. in the wrong direction) with a perpetual turning (in the wrong direction). All the Lord's warning, instruction, and even judgments, were utterly in vain. And now, when the Lord finally puts the question why, there is no rational answer for this absolutely irrational course. — The only answer is: **they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.** This, of course, does not explain, it only restates the outrageous fact. *Tharmith* is the German *Trug*, i. e. deceit as practiced against God. This they hold fast in spite of every divine effort to make them let go the damnable thing.

They are bound to cling to the lie as opposed to the truth revealed by the Lord. John 3, 19: "They loved darkness rather than light." John 8, 45: "And because I tell you the truth ye believe me not," but when one tells them *tharmith*, that they eagerly believe and hold fast. And so **they refuse to return**, i. e. turn back from their wrong course. This is their obduracy, back of which lies self-deceit. Theirs is not an ordinary case of ignorance, as when the sinner does not know he is wrong and may yet be terrified to know that he is wrong when the truth finally reaches him. They have determined once for all to spurn the truth which has abundantly been brought to them, they have deliberately chosen the lie, and thus their hearts are adamant against any call of grace to turn, i. e. to repent. Acts 7, 51: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." "The Lord wanted to lead them out of Pharaoh's bondage, but they murmured and would not, and longed again for the fleshpots of Egypt. He wanted to make them a happy people in Canaan under the scepter of his holy Commandments, but they would not, they preferred to live after the manner of the heathen. He gave them prophets and kings to lead them on the right path, but they would not, they killed and stoned the prophets that were sent unto them. He sent enemies and oppressors upon them, to see whether they would not bend under the rod of discipline, but they would not, but went on in this vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers. But let us beware lest we pronounce our own verdict while we condemn others. Has this hardness of heart, which diligently closes itself against the admonitions of divine love died out; this folly, which will not be helped, even while it daily laments its wretchedness; this superficiality, which scorns all the seriousness of God's Word and the warnings of its own conscience; this

baseness, which keeps rooting in earthly things, and is deaf against everything that comes from above; this indifference, which cannot rise up to a godly determination and a serious volition? Oh, how many thousands there are concerning whom love eternal must likewise sorrowfully complain: they would not!" Gerok. One has added: *Labi humanum, resurgere christianum, nolle resurgere diabolicum.*

There is no question that what the Lord thus declares concerning Judah is true. **I harkened and heard, but they spake not aright.** Hitzig thinks it is Jeremiah who here tells the Lord what he has observed in Judah. But this is evidently a mistake. The entire context points to Jehovah himself. Besides, even a prophet might be mistaken in judging the spiritual condition of a nation, as when Elijah supposed he alone was left as a true worshipper of God in Israel, while in fact the Lord knew that 7000 others had not bowed the knee to Baal. As Jehovah speaks in v. 5, so he continues in v. 6; there is not the slightest hint of a change. The Lord **hearkened**, means that he paid close attention, *qashab*. What he heard is directly stated: **they spake not aright**, *lo'-ken* = that which is not, i. e. untruth, falsehood, reading *lo'-ken* as a substantive. Others take it as the actual reply of the people: "Not so!" i. e. "we will not," cf. Matth. 23, 37: "I would . . . but ye would not." — Their actions match their words: **no man repented him of his wickedness, etc.**, *nicham*, niph'al participle from *nacham*, "to feel sorry." They paid no attention to their sin and guilt, either acknowledging no wrong, or excusing themselves when confronted by the Lord's Word charging them with wrong. — How innocent of any guilt they act is brought out by the addition: **saying, What have I done?** This is not ignorance, which enlightenment could remove. Nor is this a request to have any wrong pointed out. It is a flat denial of sin and guilt,

a refusal to admit either. And we must read it as spoken after the Lord had sent his prophet's warning and had done all that he could to induce repentance. — The negative statement: "no man repented him," is now followed by the positive: **every one turned to his course**. Really *kulloh* (see *kol*) is "complex," or "totality," i. e. the entire mass. The Lord demanded that they "turn," *shub*, and this is the turning, *shob*, that Judah as a people offered him. The thing sounds like wicked irony. They "turned" indeed, but each **to his course**, *merutsah*, see 2 Sam. 18, 27. Koenig explains the figure in the word "course" by *Tun und Treiben*. After all the Lord's efforts they follow the same evil course as before; they refuse to give up the choice they have made. — They follow it with greater ardor than before. The Lord's warning, instead of checking them, only serves to speed them up: **as the horse rusheth into the battle**, *shataph*, used of a flood of water, connoting irresistibility. When in battle a charge is made by the cavalry, each horse is given free rein and left to run unchecked into the fray, so these sinners dash madly forward. The point of the comparison is in this lack of any check or reining in.

The unnaturalness and irrationality of this obduracy of Judah is now brought out more fully, first figuratively by pointing to examples in the world of nature, and secondly by pointing to Judah's perversion of the Lord's own law and written Word.

7. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.
8. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.
9. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken;

lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?

The birds here mentioned are all birds of passage, and as such follow a certain law of nature, returning regularly to their summer homes at the coming of spring. **The stork in the heaven** pictures the bird on the wing. *Mo'adim* are the spring and the fall seasons, **her appointed times**, for the migration. — Obdurate Judah has fallen beneath these irrational creatures. They obey the law given them in their nature by their Creator, **but my people know not the judgment of the LORD**, *mishphat*, the norm of right established for them by the God of the covenant. The point of the comparison lies in the idea of a law or norm of what is right. In the one case this norm lies in the domain of nature and the creature world; in the other case it lies in the domain of the spiritual and the human world. In both cases there is the obligation of what is normal and according to nature. It is according to nature for migratory birds to fly north and then south, as the change of seasons requires. It is equally according to nature, i. e. the spiritual nature implanted by grace in the Lord's people, that they know the Lord's judgment, and show by their lives that they know it. But Judah has resisted the Lord's grace. Though still called here "my people" by the Lord, the designation refers only to the choice the Lord once made of Judah when he made this people his own by his grace and gave them his "judgment," the norm of his Word. And so this people stands condemned in the sight of all God's creatures who follow the nature he has given them, while Judah repudiates and violates hers.

The charge thus made against perverse and obdurate Judah is driven home. The Lord exposes and cuts off the lying plea of the leaders of the people. **How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD**

is with us? The question itself already implies the falseness of the claim made. The claim of the false prophets in Judah and her perverse leaders is that they do not need Jeremiah's words, they are well informed without him, they have all the instruction necessary for their guidance, they are fully enlightened regarding the Lord's Word. This is the plea of all those who pervert the Word of God, and while they claim to know, believe, and follow it, really put their own ideas into it and hand them out as the truth of God. This is the story of all error, from the slightest to the gravest and most extended. Only by "error" we must understand not merely our faulty or imperfect grasp of the Lord's Word in one or the other point, but what error really is, a man's adherence to religious falsehood in opposition to the truth brought to him. Such error becomes fixed and established; men harden themselves in it. They resist the divine truth. At the same time they claim to accord with the Lord's Word, to possess the true religious wisdom. Often they are very haughty and arrogant about it. They treat with disdain the messengers of the real Word, and by their pride and superciliousness intensify their obduracy. — The Lord's answer to this insolent and false question is given in the following form in our Authorized Version: **Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.** There is, however only one sentence, namely: "Lo, certainly the false pen of the scribes has made it (the *thorah*) falsehood," i. e. perverted it. The Lord thus repudiates the perversion of his instruction offered by these teachers of the people as his Word. These *sopherim* are all those who busy themselves with God's Word. They were scribes (lawyers) as well as priests. They taught orally, but often fixed their teaching by writing it down. Thus they wielded a "false pen," and what they wrote down of the *thorah* was nothing but falsehood. The

verb *'asah* has the general sense of "make." Jerome sketches the perversion of these falsifiers: "They talked to the people of good days, they praised the people, they spread mild salve on the wounds, and deceived the people away from their calamities. They were the ones who advertised themselves as good soul physicians, who wanted to heal the wounds of others with their own wisdom, while they themselves were bleeding from many wounds of their own deeds of shame." We have plenty of these fake physicians now dispensing the nostrums of their own wisdom to foolish souls as the true divine remedies, and thus doctoring them to death. Note the repetition: "false pen . . . falsehood." — This divine verdict, given in advance, will certainly be established by the outcome. Men may deceive themselves regarding the Lord and what he will do at last, but when judgment descends all the false and lying wisdom of deception will be blown away. **The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken**, i. e. in the day of judgment. They are brought to disgrace, *sie werden zuschanden* (see the verb *yabesh* in connection with *bosh*), when the terrible outcome of their obdurate and lying course is at last exposed under the flashes of divine wrath and judgment. — The verb translated "are dismayed," *chaththu*, see *chathath*, means knicked, smashed, frightened, namely at sight of descending judgment, which their teaching had beautifully denied as impossible. — The final touch is added: they are "taken," *lakad*, caught in the avalanche of judgment, they, the deceivers, together with the fools they deceived. Thus the inexorable march of events, foretold by the Lord's true Word, will deal with all who try to pervert it. — There can be no other outcome. **Lo, they have rejected the Word of the LORD**, that is their fatal fault. Against all the warnings of the Lord they persisted and would not bow to his Word. Covenant Lord though he was

to them, they would not enter the covenant with him. — And so the Lord asks: **and what wisdom is in them?** Answer, none. This final question is due to the false claims of wisdom with which these perverted leaders of Judah deceived themselves and their people, and thus sank into hopeless obduracy. "What wisdom is in them?" one may ask to-day of thousands of preachers, teachers, and leaders of the people, who boast of intelligence, scientific results, modern advancement, high titles from famous universities, books sold by thousands, etc., and yet with all their "wisdom" do nothing but pervert and deny the Gospel truths of salvation as revealed by the Lord. Men may be impressed by them now, and grow as hard and stiff in religious lies as these teachers. When the Lord reckons with them, then shall come this question again: "And what wisdom is in them?" It will seal in its way their everlasting doom.

SUGGESTIONS

The analytic outline of Geo. Hein in *Sermon Sketches of the Old Testament* runs as follows:

Back to God!

1. *One's common sense makes it advisable* (4-5).
2. *A living conscience makes it necessary* (6).
3. *A divine providence makes it possible* (7).
4. *Our Holy Bible makes it obligatory* (8-9).

In the second part God is described as listening to note whether Judah's conscience was stirred, after he had sent them his prophets with their warning and call to repent. In the third part the idea of nature is used, namely that God made it possible in his natural providence for the birds to migrate, and by his spiritual providence or provision of salvation made it possible for men to return to God. The elaboration of the first and last parts is easy on the basis of the text portions used. This outline is an application from the text to the hearers of to-day. It uses the main idea presented in the text,

namely Judah's obduracy, in a subordinate manner, yet in the theme, "Back to God!" the great concept of the text contained in the verb *shub*, is finely utilized.

It is natural to follow the order of thought in the text and thus build an analytic sermon. A simple way is to make two parts, v. 4-7 and v. 8-9, using the evident subject of the text, namely Judah's obduracy, as the substance of the theme. Here is an arrangement of this type:

The Self-condemnation of Impenitence,

as illustrated by Judah in Jeremiah's time.

- I. *Impenitence always condemns itself by its senseless unreason.*
- II. *Impenitence always condemns itself by its senseless self-deception.*

In the elaboration the senseless unreason will be pictured first from v. 4-5, substantiated as to the fact in Judah's case from v. 6; and secondly from v. 7. Likewise the senseless self-deception can be shown, first from the Word itself, concerning the true contents of which impenitent men deceive themselves in a senseless manner, and secondly from the actual divine judgment that is bound to follow impenitence, concerning which impenitent men deceive themselves only as long as that judgment still holds back. In a sermon of this kind there must, however, always be the other side, namely first the good sense and right reason of ready and complete repentance, and the good sense and blessed honesty of repentance and faith in believing what the Lord says while there is yet time. Of course, instead of the two parts given above, three or even four may be made by dividing into smaller portions.

An interesting sermon may be attained by taking the text apart in its significant details, lifting each one into prominence by itself. When the Lord comes to us with his saving Word and grace,

Is There Any Real Reason Why a Man Should Refuse to Repent?

Answer the question yourself, by looking at

- I. *The man that falls down.*
- II. *The man who takes the wrong road.*
- III. *The birds who know their seasons.*
- IV. *The horse that rushes into battle (to be shot).*
- V. *The truth which the divine Word utters.*
- VI. *The judgment which comes inevitably at last.*

Finally, a simple synthetic arrangement may be used: The saddest fact in the history of men, when the Lord complains about Judah of old in Jeremiah's time and equally about the unbelievers of our time:

"No Man Repented Him of His Wickedness."

Think how the Lord left nothing undone to bring men to repentance. See,

- I. The Lord sent all his heavenly grace.*
- II. The Lord warned with his coming judgment.*
- III. The Lord urged with every right appeal.*

Let us appreciate his grace, reckon with his judgment, thankfully yield to his effective appeals.

INVOCAVIT

Gen. 22, 1-14

The writer once heard a sermon on this text during the Lenten season, in which the faith of Abraham was set forth at length as an example for us to-day. It consisted throughout of homiletical *application*: as he, so we; as then, so now. *Abraham* was the central figure. That sermon was worse than unsatisfactory, it was full of incongruity at every vital point. The entire text was desperately cheapened and pitifully lowered by the effort to parallel what happened to Abraham with what now at times happens to us, and what Abraham did with what we ought to do now. The incongruity is too gross. It condemns itself. There are no true and complete parallels between Abraham and us, the Christians of to-day, in this transaction of Isaac's sacrifice. All efforts to manufacture such parallels fall flat. They do more, they offend. Abraham holds a position which none of us ever can hold. Isaac has no counterpart among the sons of Christians to-day. The significance of his sacrifice is unique and absolutely without a duplicate among Christian men and women to-day. Why not, once for all, recognize these incontrovertible facts? Away with these themes offered by Langsdorff and others, usually even in first place: "Abraham's temptation"; "How Abraham's faith was completed"; "The obedience of faith"; "The test of faith and obedience"; etc. — This text moves on a far higher plane, Its burden is *appropriation* instead of application. Its chief figure is not Abraham, but *Isaac, the image of Christ*. It is not occupied with "lessons" showing how we should stand in temptation, do God's

bidding, etc.; but reveals the love of God, who "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," Rom. 8, 32. This is the only treatment of this text which satisfies, and that at any time, to say nothing of the Passion season. Even to put half the sermon on Abraham's example, while the other half is given to Christ as reflected in Isaac, is to damage the sermon to that extent. Our themes must be: "Isaac's sacrifice prefiguring the cross of Christ"; "The Gospel of the Father who spared not his only Son"; "Christ typified in Isaac"; etc. — Let no one for a moment suppose that what is here advocated is a mere figurative use of the text. In Isaac's offering we have nothing less than one of the grand Old Testament *types* of Christ, one rich beyond many others. All such types are unique. Divinely designed they are God's own revelations of what the great Antitype should eventually be and bring for us. They are thus the substance of the Gospel itself in its Old Testament form. Any man who sets out to preach on Old Testament texts should refresh his memory by a review study of the Old Testament types. When he is through with that study he will quit trying to squeeze "lessons" and applications out of texts which present types of Christ. He will use the types to picture to his hearers the great Antitype and thus mightily stir up and increase their faith. Happily we are free from the old Catholic saint-worship and saint-preaching; unhappily, however, many a preacher lets some Bible saint, and even some miserable Bible sinner (Judas, Pilate, Caiaphas, etc), crowd in front of Jesus in the sermon and hide the blessed Savior almost completely from our view.

Reu in his Old Testament Thomasius series draws attention to the position of our text in Genesis. In the Toledoth of Terah, i. e. the history of his life as we would say, which extend from Gen. 11, 27-25, 11, we have first Abraham's call and removal to the land of

promise, ch. 12-14; secondly, the promise of an heir and the gift of the covenant, ch. 15-16; thirdly, the change of his name and the covenant sign, ch. 17-21; finally, the significant offering of Isaac and the confirmation of the covenant. Our text thus puts us at the very climax of the Lord's dealings with Abraham.

1. And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am*. 2. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

The great story begins with the simple connecting formula: **And it came to pass after these things, *hadd^eharim***, these occurrences. "These things" properly include all that has been recorded in the Toledoth of Terah. God's previous dealings with Abraham are now to be brought to their climax. It has been a story of wonderful grace thus far, and it shall continue with a still greater revelation of grace. It has likewise been a story of wonderful faith, and that faith shall rise to still greater height. Delitzsch has an eye for the latter when he tells us how in humbleness of faith Abraham went into a strange country, how in the power of faith he with only 318 men conquered four kings, how in the firmness of faith he received the promise that seemed contrary to reason and to nature, how in the boldness of faith he pleaded for Sodom, how in the joy of faith he named and circumcised his son, how in the consistency of faith he put away Hagar and Ishmael, how in the gratitude of faith he planted a grove in Beer-sheba and called upon the Lord, and how now at last in the victory of faith he received his son as it were from the dead. But this is only a half-vision. It may serve to show us how commentators, and preachers following their lead,

allow Abraham and his faith so to fill the foreground of the picture that the Lord, his grace, promise, and gift are pretty effectually shut out from our view. No, we must see the grace, fasten all our attention on that, subordinate Abraham and his faith, and so we shall be ready to have our hearts filled with that grace, the full glory of which we see in Jesus Christ, and there will be no trouble at all about faith on our part. — Time has passed, and Isaac has grown up to be a fine lad. Some think he must have been 21 years old, though they do not say how they come by this exact figure.

The story of the offering is introduced by the statement, **that God did tempt Abraham.** Stosch draws attention to the order of the words, *Elohim* first and then the verb, thus emphasizing that what is now recounted is to be understood as a testing or trying out of Abraham, *nasach*. It certainly was that for him. But for us to-day, as far as our faith is concerned, the trial of Abraham has its great importance in the divine elements of grace, promise, covenant, and Gospel that form its setting. Our faith, in other words, whether tried in any manner like Abraham's or not, rests on the same grounds and flows from the same sources as his. — There is no reason to think that God spoke to Abraham in a dream, or in a night vision. Even then Abraham would have been no less certain regarding the divine command. Communications by means of dreams and visions never lacked certainty, see Matth. 1, 20 etc. As far as we are able to say God spoke to Abraham during the night, for he rose up early in the morning to carry out God's order without delay, v. 3. Perhaps it was as in the case of Samuel, who awoke when God called him during the night, 1 Sam. 3. When thus God **said unto him, Abraham,** he at once answered, **Behold, I (am here).** The Berleburger Bible aptly remarks that afterward Isaac addressed his father in

the same way and received the same ready answer, v. 7.

Now follows the divine command: **Take now thy son, etc.** Commentators love to dwell on the emotions which each of the expressions used in the command must have awakened in Abraham's heart, love, joy, and joyful expectation, ending suddenly in consternation when the command is pronounced. It is the same story — we hear all about Abraham, nothing about God. Why do not these commentators think about God, when every word here used points to him who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, who spared not his Son, but actually delivered him as a sacrifice for us all? **Take now thy son** — that is exactly what God afterwards did with his Son. On *qach* see *laqach*; the added *na*, translated “now,” is like the Ger. *doch*. **Thine only son Isaac** inserts the name here, while in the original it follows “whom thou lovest.” The term *yachid*, “only,” single, is in the sense both of number and of value or worth. Isaac as the “only” son is a true type in this point of God's only begotten Son. In reading here God's infinite love for his Son we lose nothing of the love of Abraham for Isaac, on the contrary we gain. — It is the same with the addition: **whom thou lovest, Isaac.** To think here only of Abraham's love, even though we add to that love all that lay in the promises centering in Isaac, is to miss the real tenderness that lies in these words as they were spoken by God, namely his own love for the Son who is “the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person,” Heb. 1, 3. God has purposely arranged the relation of Abraham to Isaac in the point of love, so as to produce in a human way a type of his own love for his beloved Son. — Now by an act of Abraham himself all that Isaac was as a type of Christ is to be brought fully to view. What God bids Abraham to do in a way God himself

will actually do in fact, namely in a way that exceeds all human possibilities. **Get thee into the land of Moriah**, God tells Abraham. Why into this land? And why in particular **upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of?** There are those who think of the prolonged conflict which the delay in arriving at the distant place of sacrifice was bound to cause in Abraham's heart. To have the ordeal over with in an hour or two, right where he was then living, would not have been so severe a trial as to wait and travel slowly till the third day. It is all true, of course, but it is the lesser part of the truth. The decisive part of it is that the locality chosen of God for Isaac's sacrifice was the future site of Jerusalem, where God would actually deliver his own Son into death for us all. This mountain in the land of Moriah links up the type with the antitype in the closest and most unmistakable way. The distance from Beer-sheba to Jerusalem is 20½ hours' travel. The derivation and significance of *Moriyyah* is in dispute. It will not do to say that the event here recorded produced the name, and that in v. 2 it is used by prolepsis, for it is God himself who here employs the name, and that with the article. This idea of a prolepsis makes the meaning of *Moriyyah* identical with *Yahveh-yir'eh*, the name given the place by Abraham, v. 14, by assuming a derivation from *ra'ah*, combined with *Yah* (abbreviation of *Yahveh*) = Jehovah's appearance. Far better is the derivation from *yarah*, the hiphil of which means "to teach"; hence "the land of Moriah" = the land of Jehovah's instruction. The article is demonstrative. Stosch rightly explains: "Here, too, God leads Abraham into an unnamed land (12, 1), a land which he simply indicates as the place of the revelation of Jehovah about to be made. "From Beer-sheba only one road led into mountainous country, so that Abraham knew the direction he had to take,

3. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. 4. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. 5. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again unto you. 6. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

The story is told graphically and with considerable detail, so that there is little to explain. **Abraham rose up early in the morning** and proceeded at once to carry out the Lord's bidding. There is no hesitation, no questioning, no delay. Commentators usually supply a lot of material on the thoughts Abraham must have had; they read the story literally full of emotions. But the account as Moses set it down for us shows next to no emotions and draws a veil over Abraham's thoughts. Only one thing is clear to our vision, Abraham renders the obedience of faith. Every act of his, and every word make that plain. — We may at this point as well as not settle the questions involved in this obedience of faith. For Abraham's faith the severity of trial lay not so much in the natural affection he had for his son, and the consequent natural reluctance to lose that son in death. It lay in the plane of faith: here God had given him this son in what may well be called a miraculous way, and here God had attached to this son, and to him alone, the most glorious and far-reaching covenant promises — and now at one stroke, with this strange command, God seemed to cancel and contradict all that he had done so far. Was there not some mistake

about it? Luther puts it in this way: "Human reason could conclude only this: either that the promise was a lie, or this could not be God's, but the devil's, command. For if Isaac is to be killed, the promise is in vain and for nought; but if the promise is sure and is to stand, then it should be impossible for this to be God's command." Some have said: there was indeed a direct contradiction, and Abraham believed the two contradictory things, and never even tried to harmonize them. They also draw the conclusion that we to-day are to do the same thing, namely believe what is plainly and palpably contradictory to our minds, when the Scriptures present such things. But this is a mistake. Hebr. 11, 17 etc. reads: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence he received him also in a figure." Abraham's faith used the doctrines of the omnipotence of God, and of the resurrection from the dead, and thus stood firm in the trial and obeyed in faith. This is his example for us to-day. There are no real contradictions in God. Apparent contradictions are solved by the revelation of God himself. Thus faith is to stand unshaken.—Another question is God's commanding human sacrifice. Delitzsch is right: the outcome of the trial, when God stayed Abraham's hand, disposes of this question.—More subtile is the point, that first God commands the sacrifice, then he prevents its consummation, thus apparently contradicting himself. The answer here is that we should not pit the two against each other, but combine them. The combination lies in God's purpose, first to make Isaac a type of the Son God would himself sacrifice; and secondly, to bring the faith of both Abraham and Isaac to the ultimate height intended by God. It is

as if God said to Abraham: If I should ask you to sacrifice your only son, would you do it? and as if Abraham by his action answered: Lord, I would.

The **ass** was taken along to carry camping material and the wood for the sacrifice. **His two young men** were servants; Abraham was a man of importance and wealth, and carried himself accordingly. — Dry **wood** was taken along, properly split so as to be piled up on the altar and then lighted. Whether Abraham **clave the wood** with his own hands, as Luther and others think, we are not sure. **Isaac** and the servants must have helped in making ready, and Abraham must have explained the matter of the wood as necessary for the worship of sacrifice he intended to make, not specifying the sacrifice any further. — The start of the journey is marked by the expression: **and rose up** (*qum*). So Abraham **went unto the place of which God had told him**. This is the fact recorded concerning his faith and obedience, which we must also note. As far as Abraham's thoughts are concerned, we have his actions only to guide us, and the explanation already noted in Hebr. 11. It is best to stop with these.

On the third day the general destination was reached. Abraham **saw the place afar off**, that is the particular hill on which the offering was to be made, which, in some way not recorded, God at this time pointed out to him. — We may suppose that a halt was made, for the two servants were to go no farther. Like other saints of God Abraham clung in faith to God, held firmly to his Word, and placed all else, especially the outcome, into the hands of God. — With remarkable steadiness Abraham now proceeds to execute the Lord's bidding. God certainly helped him to say the right words, not too much, not too little, and to do what was exactly the right thing. It has been well said, no human writer could have invented this story with its few but absolutely perfect

details. The young men are to be left behind, for the great thing about to be done concerned only the father and the son. So he orders: **Abide ye here with the ass.** And he explains: **I and the lad** (or "young man") **will go yonder and worship**, *hithp.* from *shachah*, "bow down," i. e. in adoration. As far as Abraham was concerned this bowing down to God exactly expresses the act he was contemplating, and it is a fine touch in his statement that he includes in this act also his son, assuming that when finally the son shall hear what God has directed to be done he too will acquiesce in obedient faith like the father. — A finer and more significant expression is the addition: **and come again to you.** Only faith, invincible faith, could have uttered this word. Reu is right: "This, too, is no lie of necessity, on the contrary it is the beating of the wings of faith. By this faith he becomes a prophet. Faith is indeed a certain confidence in what one hopes for, not doubting what is not seen," Hebr. 11, 1. This word shows us that Abraham never let go of the original promise of God as centered in Isaac; that he absolutely trusted the life of his son to the God who gave it, never doubting that in some way, though as yet unknown, the seeming contradiction in God's promise and command would be gloriously solved.

So the two set out. **And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son.** Here see Christ, our sacrifice, typified, as he was made to bear the wood of his cross on the way to Golgotha. How natural the act, that Isaac the son, and not Abraham the father, should bear the wood, and yet who can help but see the typical feature here presented to all believers in Christ. — **And he took the fire in his hand,** perhaps a pot with live coals constantly kept burning, **and a knife.** This too, we may say, is typical, though in a broader way. For in the sacrifice Christ made, the will of his Father

acted: "Not my will, but thine be done." The Scriptures say: God "delivered him up for us all," Rom. 8, 32; 4, 25. Roos writes: "The same faith that considered not the dead body (Sarah), but was certain that God could make a son to be born of it, here too considered not the knife and the fire, but thought: God is able to raise again the former man from the ashes." — **And they went both of them together.** There is surely a touch of feeling in this simple sentence, the more since the same words are set down a second time at the end of v. 8. Moses, when he wrote the story, must have allowed his mind to linger on this picture: father and son going side by side, bearing what was needed for a burnt offering; and he wanted his readers, us among them now, to linger in thought likewise. Note too the meekness of Isaac and his reticence. He has not distressed his father by inquisitive questions. He undoubtedly saw and also felt his father's exceptional seriousness. In silent and humble obedience he follows.

7. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for the burnt offering? 8. And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

We may well take it that this was the only conversation between the two as both of them went together. It is inserted for a purpose. Let no man suppose that Abraham was stern, like some fanatic, without heart and feeling as he thus walked beside his son. Note the paternal heart when he replies to his son, not merely: **Here am I**, but adds with deepest affection: **my son**. — Isaac's question is not one of curiosity trying to pry into something as yet withheld from him. When his father had not ex-

plained he had respected the silence, knowing there must have been a sufficient and serious reason for it. Isaac's attitude has not changed on this point when at last he ventured to speak. Luther understands Isaac's question when he explains it as expressing Isaac's solicitude that his father, who looked so serious as if a great burden rested on his soul, had perhaps for this very reason overlooked the necessary **lamb for a burnt offering**. Things like that happen under great stress of mind. — Undoubtedly that question struck deeply into Abraham's heart. God steadied him and gave him the right answer. Note again the tender address: **My son**. And then the answer of faith: *Elohim*, who has all things in his power, **will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering**. No, this is no lying evasion. Calvin writes: *Confugit in asylum divinae providentiae*, he takes refuge in the asylum of divine providence. The verb *yir'eh*, from *ra'ah* signifies *ausersesehen*, in the sense of choose. This answer seems to hold back something, namely the very thing asked about, and yet it gives more than it seems to hold back. It conveys to Isaac the mighty fact that what his father was now engaged in was a matter belonging wholly to God, altogether of God's own designing, not of Abraham's; and at the same time it informs Isaac that his own father did not fully know about it all, and was himself waiting on God to make all things plain in his own time. God must have enabled Abraham to make this answer, so true, so timely, withholding what was still to be withheld, yet giving so richly what both, Abraham and Isaac, had to hold fast to until God himself would act. "And so they went both of them together."

9. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. 10. And

Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. 11. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. 12. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

All the inspired narratives are wonderful. One great trait, marking them all, is that they record only the pertinent facts that God deems necessary for us, and not one word more. Even in the most tragic matters, as in the most stupendous acts, rhetoric and human elaboration are wholly absent. The fact is, they would seem trashy in such accounts, they would cheapen and lower the effect, they would make Inspiration look as if after all it were not Inspiration. The man who can read these biblical narratives without sensing the vast difference between them and all mere human efforts at writing, ought to go and saw wood somewhere, and let Bible exposition alone. If the product of Inspiration is not on a far higher level than the writings that are uninspired of God, then Inspiration is a mere dream, and they who think it real are fools. This entire story of Abraham and especially its climax v. 9-12, bears the divine imprint. No uninspired writer could have set down this account as did the inspired pen of Moses. — The place designated by God, because the place also is part of this typical event, is reached at last. **Which God had told him of** once more emphasizes this important point. God saw Jerusalem built afterwards on this very elevation; Abraham did not and could not, nor could Moses have known when he so markedly and repeatedly referred to this **place**. — Now the salient facts, and these alone, are set down in briefest form. First: **Abraham built an altar there.** It is a necessary part of

act of sacrificing. Whether it was of stones, or only of earth, is not stated; the former seems more likely, as neither father nor son carried shovels to make a mound of earth. — Next, he **laid the wood in order**; *'arak = aufreihen*, "stack." This too was a necessary act for a burnt offering. Abraham may have done all this without saying anything further to his son than he had said on the way hither. If not before, now finally he had to speak and tell Isaac what God had commanded. But not a word of what transpired between father and son is set down in the sacred record. Luther has a supposition: either Moses did not trust himself to utter such things, or he could not write them down because of weeping. Both notions are beside the mark. God withheld this part of the story. That fact tells us something, especially us preachers. We have already said how the commentators and preachers in handling this text love to put Abraham forward, describe what he must have felt at this point and at that, what he must have thought, questioned, concluded at every stage. Well, here is the supreme place for feeling, etc., as far as Abraham is concerned. Here the dramatic feature of the story could have been unfolded with a tenseness to wring the heart of the most calloused. And right here the inspired writer leaves a — blank. Accept it; do not try to fill in. God wants us to see and note, not the feelings of Abraham, but God's own hand, plan, grace, guidance, and the acts of Abraham's faith accepting all these from God's hand. Preach accordingly. Faith built the altar, faith laid on the wood; for this faith clung to the Word and grace of God. — And now faith takes the final step: Abraham **bound Isaac his son, and laid him upon the altar upon the wood**. This binding at once reminds us of the sacrificial lambs. So they were bound and laid on the altar, then to receive the stroke of the knife and to be burnt. This important typical feature is plain,

One may ask, however, whether this binding was necessary for the boy Isaac. Calvin is about the only one who remarks: lest something should happen in the midst of the act. Perhaps fright and struggle or panic when now the father would raise the knife for the death stroke. It is about all that we can say. One is almost bound to think that Isaac, like his father, accepted in faith and submissive obedience the divine command. We refuse to think that the father forced his son, and bound him for such a reason.

The climax is reached. Having lifted the precious burden and laid it gently on the stacked-up wood, Abraham stooped to take the knife he had laid down on the ground. Moses writes that he **stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.** The usual pictures of this scene show Abraham standing beside his son with the knife raised up to plunge into the victim's heart. But *shalach* is "stretch out," and *laqach* is "take." It seems more in accord with these two verbs to think of Abraham's act as merely stooping and taking up the knife. As he picked up the knife, God interfered. It may seem more dramatic to have the point of the knife above the boy's throat, but what seems dramatic to us never determines the facts. The act of taking the knife from the ground was enough for God in dealing with Abraham to accept the sacrifice as virtually made.—The Lord now intervenes. It ought to go without saying that **the angel of the LORD**, *mal'ach Yahveh*, is Yahveh himself. We need not repeat here what has already been said on Ex. 3, 2, Sixth Sunday After Epiphany. *Yahveh* did not use one of his angels to speak from heaven, but spoke himself, as the words he uttered show beyond question. Delitzsch has found favor among the commentators by explaining *'Elohim* in v. 1 and 8 as denoting the Creator who has power over life and death, power also to take back what he has given; while the *Maleach Yahveh* who prevents the

slaying of Isaac is the covenant Lord who considers his promise in Isaac, and that if Isaac perished the promise would fall and the veracity of God be impugned. But the fact is, there is no such duality in God. Elohim does not command what afterwards Jehovah cancels. Elohim as Creator and God of might could as such have finally granted Isaac's life, or by his might, as Abraham also believed, raised Isaac from the dead. In general Elohim exercises his might to further the covenant plans of love and grace. So here, too, there is no clash or opposition between Elohim and Jehovah, on the contrary, both are in harmony concerning Isaac. The refuge of Abraham in Heb. 11, 17 is therefore also in θεός, and his power, δυνατός, not in κύριος, Lord. Elohim bade Abraham sacrifice Isaac, but did not take the actual sacrifice, because Yahveh had centered in Isaac all the covenant promises. The God of might and the Lord of grace always accord, because God is one.—The call from the skies: **Abraham, Abraham,** halts the action. Note the doubling, which occurs so frequently in the Scriptures, and always has love and grace back of it. The patriarch replies: **Here am I,** pausing for the divine voice to speak further.

The order: **Lay not thine hand upon the lad,** has the same verb as in v. 10, *shalach*, "stretch out." Abraham is not to stretch out his hand with the knife against his son. More: **neither do thou any thing unto him,** i. e. to hurt him. The trial of the patriarch and his son is at an end. Reu writes: "This is what the trial aimed at. It was to be a means in the hand of God to find out whether Abraham so feared God that he would not withhold from him his son, the only one, the bearer of the promise, in spite of the fact that the deliverance of his son seemed necessarily to annul the fulfillment and promise of God's blessing for all nations. God indeed by virtue of his unconditionate foreknowledge had known in advance the

victorious outcome of this temptation; but just this is the greatness as also the merciful condescension of God, that he does not turn this foreknowledge into foreordination, but that he enters into time and history, gives to man the possibility of free choice, and thus in time as it were, learns anew by the deed what he already knew in eternity. By the fact, however, that this firm constancy of Abraham in the trial is a fact of history, something, as it were, is given into the hand of God, whereby he is able to justify his verdict before Satan and the world, as also in the last judgment (cf. James 2, 21 etc., where the sense of the words *καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφή ἣ λέγουσα ἐπίστευσεν κτλ.* can be only: In the giving of Isaac it is proven that God valued the faith of Abraham correctly, when he — before this — accepted it as righteousness). Also on the other hand Abraham was thereby greatly strengthened and confirmed in his faith-life, for it was shown him as never before by an unforgettable impressive actuality, that God really never contradicts himself, but does not cancel his promise even when human eyes see nothing but cancellation." — In this sense we must understand the words: **for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.** What was in Abraham's heart had come out for all men to view and know in Abraham's completed act.

13. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. 14. And Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

Usually so much thought is put upon Isaac, that the **ram** receives slight attention. It is, of course, obvious that by forbidding Isaac's sacrifice God

revealed his horror of all human sacrifices; also that by providing the ram he approved of all the future Levitical sacrifices. But the chief point in the ram is the great doctrine of substitution: **in the stead of his son, *thachath***, in place of him. Thus where Isaac ceased to typify Christ and his substitutionary sacrifice, the ram completes it. Isaac now becomes a type of all those who are spared for Christ's sake. — It is certainly fitting that Abraham should have named the place where the Lord had so wonderfully revealed himself. The name he chose goes to the heart of the whole incident: *Yahveh yir'eh*, "Jehovah sees," from *ra'ah*, looks into, with mercy, and to aid and help. Moses adds the note that this name continued to his time, so that people said: "In the mount where Jehovah is seen."

SUGGESTIONS

Please read again the introductory remarks in the exegetical section. They are to show how this text should be treated also homilitically. We shall not put Abraham forward, but Christ and the things pertaining to his sacrifice.

A simple and natural way to use with historical texts or narratives is to view them as each telling a story. We name the story, and then we make the main chapters of it the parts, and thus secure a division. But there are narratives like the one in our text which cannot be handled in this way, because the parts of the story would not be coordinate and of equal weight, and could thus hardly serve as divisions in the sermon. This observation on the narrative before us should teach us that in all Bible narratives offered as text the main thing is not to look for mere outward divisions or sections in the narrative, but for the real significance of the entire narrative and of its various portions. Any division of the story as a story should be governed by this inner significance. We want the meat of divine truth in the nut of the narrative, not merely the different parts of the shell. So here in our text. It pictures the love of God who spared not his own Son, the sacrifice of Christ on Golgotha, the great reality of substitution in God's plan of salvation, and the blessed deliverance thus secured for us (the ram slain in Isaac's stead). This already furnishes us a good

division, which needs only a theme to cover these great thoughts, and a little shaping and filing of the parts in the way of formulation. Koegel, for instance, has: **The Gospel of the Father Who Spared Not His Only Son.** His parts are: *I. The greatness of the sacrifice that is offered; II. The wealth of blessing that flows from this sacrifice.* But we could use the four thoughts presented above: It is the Gospel: *I. Of infinite love; II. Of divine sacrifice; III. Of glorious substitution; IV. Of blessed deliverance.* — We may also follow Romann:

Looking from Moriah to Golgotha.

- I. The Father's counsel of love for our salvation.*
- II. The Son's sacrifice for our deliverance.*
- III. The Holy Spirit's Gospel for our believing.*

Romann's parts are here reproduced freely from the lengthier German. But here again, while we keep the theme, we may build our own parts. What is it that we see as we stand on Moriah and look toward Golgotha?

- I. An altar far better.*
- II. A lamb more precious.*
- III. A sacrifice more complete.*
- IV. A substitution still grander.*
- V. A deliverance that lasts for ever.*
- VI. The eternal foundation for saving faith. —*

An Old Testament way of presenting the heart of the Gospel for faith to make its own was by means of types. One of the finest and most expressive of these types is set before us in the Offering of Isaac.

The Sacrifice of Isaac Typifies the Sacrifice of Christ.

There is a divinely intended resemblance

- I. Between Isaac and Christ.*
- II. Between Abraham and the Father.*
- III. Between the altar on Moriah and the cross on Calvary.*
- IV. Between the blood almost shed and the blood actually shed.*
- V. Between Isaac's deliverance and Christ's deliverance.*
- VI. Between Isaac's deliverance and our deliverance.*

As Isaac's life was spared, so Christ was delivered from death by the resurrection on the third day. As Isaac was not slain, but the ram in his stead, so we escape through Christ's death.

REMINISCERE

Ex. 33, 17-23

Here again is a text the great import of which we will fail to grasp if we follow the lead of those who make Moses nothing but an example of faith and intercession which we now are to copy. The heart of this text cannot be reached by homiletical application; it is a text that calls for homiletical appropriation. — All through chapters 32 and 33 Moses is acting as the mediator of Israel in the old covenant. That covenant had been broken by Israel when it worshipped the golden calf made by Aaron. Moses labors, and labors successfully, to restore that covenant, by working to make Israel repent, and by appealing to God to show grace to Israel again. There has been only one such mediator in the former covenant. Let us not debase his position by preaching to our people as if they to-day could produce in themselves counterparts to this singular and exalted mediator, Moses. The only proper thing for us to do, especially during the Lenten season, is to place the greater Mediator of the new covenant, our Savior Jesus Christ, beside Moses, and see how the work of the latter reflects and points to the work of the former. Such a presentation will call for faith from our people. That is meant by homiletical appropriation, namely enabling our people by our presentation of Christ to grasp him by a stronger and more intelligent faith. — Beside the treatment thus indicated there is another, likewise aiming at appropriation, not at mere, and in this case certainly highly improper, application. It pivots on v. 19, on the Lord's revelation of his goodness, in particular on his proclaiming his own covenant Name and his

sovereign grace. This, for Moses and Israel, as well as for us to-day, is the chief thing in the Lord's glory. For us it is fully revealed in Jesus Christ. It is to pass before us during this holy season in the renewed proclamation of the Lord's Name and grace. We venture to summarize it as *Jehovah's glory in preaching his own grace and mercy*. — Carefully study the entire chapter as it leads up to the last portion constituting our text.

17. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

The thing that Moses had spoken, and that the Lord promised to do, is stated in V. 16, namely that, instead of merely sending an angel with Israel and Moses to Canaan, v. 2, he would now accompany Israel and its mediator in person. While this promise is included in our text, it does not seem to be an integral part of it. V. 17 is in our text because of the reason which the Lord appended to his promise, the statement which he made concerning Moses personally, and which emboldened Moses to ask still more of the Lord. — **For thou hast found grace in my sight, chen**, "favor." Moses himself refers to this statement of the Lord in v. 12. Yet we have no record where and in what connection the Lord said this to Moses. It may well have been when the Lord spoke face to face with him, as a man speaks unto his friend, v. 11, namely in the tent or tabernacle which Moses erected apart from the camp. The favor here meant has to do, not with Moses as a mere man, but with Moses in his office of a mediator for Israel. It rests on the faithfulness of Moses: "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." Heb. 3, 5. There is a resemblance here between Christ, our High Priest, and Moses, only that Christ "was

counted worthy of more glory than Moses," even as the son outranked the servant, v. 3. Yet the parallel holds. Moses was a true type of Christ; the mediator of the old covenant, a picture of the faithfulness of the Mediator of the new covenant: "Who (Christ) was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house" (i. e. Israel). Let us remember that there are two kinds of grace or favor. The one is extended to the unworthy sinner for Christ's sake in justification; the other is extended to the beloved children of God who delight in his ways, and in particular also to his called servants when they faithfully administer the great trust laid upon them by God. This grace too is grace, unmerited favor, Luke 17, 10, since every man called to office by God owes him perfect service. Yet the Lord delights to show his favor in this way; it is part of his glory and grace. — The addition: **and I know thee by name**, *yada'*, also refers to the mediatorship of Moses. The Lord knew Moses as his own, the instrument chosen and called for a special work. This statement is an acknowledgement on the Lord's part. He confesses the faithful servant who has confessed him. And even as he here confessed Moses, the mediator, so thrice in a wonderful way he acknowledged and confessed his beloved Son, our supreme Mediator. Thus Moses was emboldened to make a still greater request of the Lord. He uses this divine grace and favor, this precious divine acknowledgment of his faithfulness in office.

18. **And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.** 19. **And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.** 20. **And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live.**

The particle *na'* = "kindly"; it is like our English "please"; here translated: **I beseech thee.** The hiphil of *ra'ah* may here be translated: "let me see." The request of Moses is not intended to secure for him a mere personal favor in this life already, in advance of the bliss awaiting the faithful after the last great day. Moses is asking as the divinely appointed mediator for Israel. He had succeeded in his office, at this critical time, when Israel had broken the covenant, to have that covenant re-established. The Lord had fully and completely acknowledged him as a true mediator, to whom now he also vouchsafed all his grace. All this lies behind Moses' request and comes to a focus in that request. For the Lord to show Moses his **glory** is to furnish him, as Israel's mediator, the supreme favor and acknowledgment of the Lord. When properly understood, according to the entire context, there is nothing wrong in the request. In a way it reveals to us the climax of Moses' faithfulness in his office. The Lord's **glory** is the sum of his attributes in their revelation, also of any one or more of them shining forth. Each attribute, however, is itself the divine essence, or God himself, revealing or showing forth one or the other side of his being. Even thus each attribute is infinite, so that the human mind cannot fully grasp it; how much more then is the sum of all these attributes? — The request of Moses, let us note, is actually granted by the Lord. And in the highest possible degree. What that degree is, namely its extreme limit, and also what lies beyond the range of possibility, since Moses was still in the flesh, the Lord carefully states to him. This elaborate statement is in itself a very precious and great revelation, and we should prize it as such. — In the first place, the Lord answers: **I will make all my goodness pass before thee.** *Tub* is "goodness," kindness, graciousness. Note, not the holiness, righteousness and justice, which in themselves are full of terror to

all who are still in the sinful flesh, but the goodness, which is full of infinite blessings and benefactions. The term here evidently is not in contrast to grace and mercy, but synonymous with both, as the remainder of the verse shows. — In what way the Lord will **make** all his goodness **pass** before Moses is now stated: **I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee.** *Qara' b'sem* is used also of men, Gen. 4, 26, and then means to confess, praise and make known the Lord's name. The term **name**, used so constantly and significantly in both Testaments of God and Christ, always signifies the gracious revelation which he has made of himself. To **proclaim** the name is to preach, announce, set forth this revelation. In the case before us the Lord is himself the preacher. This is the parallel to the preaching of the Son of God in the New Testament. When the Lord himself preaches his name we have the highest form of divine revelation by means of the Word. It should be noted that Moses is thus to have pass before him the goodness of the Lord by the one means given especially to us mortals, the Word, only in this case the Word as coming directly from the Lord himself. Here then is one of the limitations which the Lord pointed out to Moses concerning the vision of the Lord's glory. — Keil reads the Hebrew copula as connecting a causal sentence with the foregoing: only because he will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, etc., does he consent to proclaim his name to Moses. We question this connection. While the copula determines nothing, the thought in the sentence is plain enough. The sum of all the Lord's goodness is here expressed: **and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, etc.** Here the proclamation of the Lord's name is actually made to Moses, and being recorded thus is mediately passed on to us. There is no Calvinistic determinism in this divine statement. The verb *chanan* means to be gracious in the sense of graciously presenting some-

thing. Now it is a matter to be determined wholly by him who thus gives, whether he will give, how he will do the giving, and to whom he will give. No one can dictate to the supreme Giver. Grace, graciousness, and giving is wholly free. Not, however, in the sense that in God there could be anything arbitrary, anything like a mere notion on his part, in this matter. On the contrary, in being gracious to whom he will be gracious he follows the norm of his own being; and when he has exercised all his graciousness, all the world will be constrained to glorify his name, i. e. this revelation of himself in grace. Presumptuous men who dare to dictate to God how and to whom he must be gracious, especially they who come with claims of works of theirs and contradict the Gospel revelation of grace, are to know once for all, that being gracious to any undeserving sinners in any way whatsoever is wholly in the hands of the sovereign Lord himself. He designed his plan of salvation, he alone; he made and gave the covenant; he sent his Son. Throughout it is he alone. That applied to Israel under Moses, and it applies to us now under Christ. In the matter of grace the Lord alone determines. Preach it! our arrogant age needs it. — The second clause emphasizes the chief point of the first by a repetition, and at the same time amplifies the first by using a synonymous term: **and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.** *Racham* means to love tenderly, and thus to show mercy. Usually, especially in the New Testament with its term *ἔλεος*, mercy, connotes misery and wretchedness. We may take it so here. Grace comes with pardon for the guilty sinner; mercy with pity and relief for the wretched sinner. Both are wholly of the Lord's own volition, and constitute his highest glory.

Thus Moses' request is already answered. As long as Moses is in the flesh he can go no higher. Therefore the Lord added: **Thou canst not see my**

face. Meusel has a fine explanation: "When he reveals himself in the theophanies of the Old Testament, this is done so that his real, essential, supermundane glory is shrouded, and temporarily a human form *th^emunah*, Num. 12, 8) is assumed. Thus the elders of Israel behold him on the mount, Ex. 24, 10; so he spoke with Moses face to face (*phanim el phanim*, Ex. 33, 11), mouth to mouth (*pheh el pheh*, Num. 12, 8), as a man speaketh unto his friend. But even Moses was allowed to see only the back parts, not the face of God, when he desired to see the essential glory of God." The difference comes out at two points: 1) as a spirit God is invisible because immaterial, while in this life our vision is bound to what is material; 2) in his absolute holiness God is unapproachable for us in our sinful state, and his visible presence would be for us a consuming fire. That is what the Lord refers to by adding: **for there shall no man see me, and live.** This marks the limitation and boundary even for the Old Testament mediator, pleading for the highest evidence of the Lord's favor. Though the divinely appointed mediator, faithful, and beloved of God, he was still a sinner. God is graciously near the believer, treats him as a father treats his child, dwells in him as a temple, lets him taste the peace and blessedness of his fellowship. Yet we walk by faith here, not by sight, 2 Cor. 5, 7. As a figure standing behind us we see him reflected in the mirror of his Word. In the life to come, when we are holy as he is holy, we shall see God immediately, intuitively, as he really is, Matth. 5, 8; 1 John 3, 2. Then the white light of his holiness shall not blind our eyes. And with the *visio Dei* there shall be united the *fruitio Dei*, the immediate enjoyment of God. From this vision of God in heaven there flows the love and praise of God (*dilectio et glorificatio Dei*), the knowledge of the divine mysteries (*divinorum mysticorum scientifica cognitio*), the confirmation in

good (*confirmatio in bono*), and the readiness for the service and worship of God (*promptitudo ad Dei servitium et cultum*). Our dogmaticians rightly and unconditionally affirm: *an beati clare et intuitive Dei essentiam sint visuri*, as far as the essence of God is concerned, namely his attributes and his person. They also affirm that this vision of God shall be *oculis corporeis*, with the bodily eyes, since these shall be glorified and made spiritual in heavenly glory. What Moses could attain only after leaving this earthly existence God could not grant him while still on earth. Usually commentators assume that Moses asked the Lord for this supermundane vision of his being. But one may well question this assumption, since he really asked: "shew me thy glory." God *did* show him his glory, and in the highest degree then possible, though there lay before him, in the world to come, a still higher vision of that glory.

21. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: 22. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: 23. And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

This part of the conversation also must have been spoken to Moses while in the tabernacle outside of the camp. The Lord now tells him of the vision of his glory which he shall see. The best real commentary on it is found in chapter 34, where the fulfillment of the promise made in our text is recorded, v. 1-8. The vision of the Lord was to occur at the top of Mt. Sinai. The actual peak of Djebel Musa is an immense rock 80 feet in diameter. There is shown a little grotto on one side, which is the supposed **clift of the rock** where Moses stood. A great flat rock forms the roof. Here, the Lord said, he would station Moses,

and 34, 2 and 4 must be read as carrying out this plan. — We must hold fast that Moses was still in earthly life and subject to its necessary limitations. Thus the words: **while my glory passeth by**, and again: **while I pass by**, refer to a presence and movement of the Lord beyond the possibility of human vision. Note that the two: “my glory,” and “I” are really identical here. To both, as here identical, the Lord’s statement in v. 20 applies: “There shall no man see me, and live.” Hence the protection which the Lord vouchsafed to Moses **I will cover thee with my hand**, i. e. almighty power. It is useless to ask, why this covering by the Lord’s omnipotent hand was not in itself enough to shield Moses, and why the Lord put him in the clift of the rock. It pleased him to place Moses there, if for no other reason then at least for this that he might realize the consuming power of the divine presence. V. 6 of the next chapter adds for us the important feature, that Moses, while in the clift shielded by the Lord’s hands, should know of his passing by, though not seeing it. The medium the Lord would use would be his Word, spoken however, by the Lord himself. When the great passing-by took place, Moses bowed his head to the earth and worshipped, v. 8. Here we ought to get a new and mighty impression of the Word in general. We usually say, the Lord is ever present where his Word resounds. This is truer and grander than we ordinarily think. At his Word and presence in his Word we too should always bow down and worship. What ungodly presumption for any man to sit in judgment on the Lord’s Word, to close ears and hearts against it! If for one instant the Lord should let his presence flame out, every one of these unbelievers would be stricken dead. — After the passing of the glory and the person the Lord promised Moses: **I will take away mine hand**. The eyes and senses of Moses should then again be allowed to act. But

then he should not see the Lord directly, but only the heavenly radiance following him: **thou shalt see my back parts**, i. e. not my face: **but my face shall not be seen**. Delitzsch writes: "As the inward being of man is manifested in his face, while the view of his back represents only an imperfect, outward picture of him, so Moses saw only the back, not the face of Jehovah. More than this could not be put into human words concerning this incomparable viewing, exceeding by far all human thinking and comprehension." We are able to add only one more thought, namely that here too the Lord must have used some earthly form of appearance, to enable Moses to see with his earthly eyes this rear reflection of his glory. As the human eye cannot, without being blinded, look directly into the blazing fire of the sun, but can view the radiant glow of the sunset, tempered to our poor power of sight, so Moses was to see the heavenly afterglow of the Lord's passing. And here we may pause to think of what heaven shall be, when we shall view "the Canaan that we love with unbeclouded eyes," and when the longing expressed in the hymnist's question:

"When shall I see my Father's face,
And in his bosom rest?"

will at last be fulfilled.

SUGGESTIONS

It is always a mistake to jump to some side issue in a text, and preach as if that were the main issue. Of course, the faith of Moses had boldness, just as the faith of many other Old and New Testament saints. But to preach on boldness of faith is to sail off on the tangent of homiletical generalization and application, and to miss the heart of this text.— There are just two pivots in this text for our sermon: 1) "Shew me thy glory"; 2) "I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." Everything else is subsidiary. Moreover, both of these sentences are extraordinary: the one is spoken, not merely by a bold

believer, but by the Old Testament mediator; the other by the Lord, not merely to a man of great faith, but to the Old Testament mediator. What Moses said and what the Lord answered, we now are to hear in order that we may the more believe. What Moses saw, and what the Lord gave him to see, we are to know that again we now may the more believe. In other words the heart of this text can be reached in a sermon only by homiletical appropriation. Accordingly we may outline as follows:

The Prayer of Moses:

Lord, Shew Me Thy Glory!

- I. *It was the prayer of the Old Testament mediator.*
 - 1) He had just reconciled fallen Israel.
 - 2) His prayer asks the Lord to confirm this reconciliation in the highest degree.
- II. *It was answered in a blessed way.*
 - 1) The Lord reveals his glory by himself proclaiming his Name.
 - 2) The Lord's glory in his grace and mercy displayed in the Word.
 - 3) The confirmation of the Word granted to Moses in the vision of the Lord.
- III. *It reminds us of the glory revealed in the New Testament Mediator.*
 - 1) The New Testament proclamation of the Lord's Name in grace and mercy.
 - 2) This glory centers in the divine Mediator himself.
- IV. *It points our hope to the Vision of God in heaven.*
 - 1) Our faith in the Name, and the grace and mercy, carries with it an eternal hope.
 - 2) That hope shall at last be realized when we see God in heaven.

Following the second line of thought indicated above, we may outline in this fashion:

When the Lord Proclaimed His Own Name.

- I. *He exalted his Word and the preaching of his grace and mercy.*
- II. *He made faith the essential thing in this life.*
- III. *He re-established his covenant.*
- IV. *He pointed us to-day to the glory of grace in Christ.*

The analysis to apply to this text, and others like it, differs from ordinary analysis. The idea is not to divide the narrative into its main parts, since that would lead to no serviceable sermon results, but to divide what may be called the substance of the text, and that substance as it actually lies in the text historically, and as it bears on us to-day who are to hear this text and the sermon on it. It is true analysis, but of a higher type.

The Lord's statement that no man can see his face and live may lead us to preach on the *Visio Dei*. Introduction: The world does not want to see God at all. It has left him, as the prodigal left his father, and the farther it gets away from him the happier it thinks it will be.— God's children love their heavenly Father. They have seen the Father in his Son, Jesus Christ. They want to get as close to God as possible. They long to see their Father's face and in his bosom rest.

Seeing God.

- I. *There is a Vision of God for us all.* The Word— grace and mercy— faith's discerning eye.
- II. *There were Visions of God for chosen men.* Moses, the prophets, the apostles ("We beheld his glory," John 1, 14)— recorded— for the confirmation of our faith.
- III. *There is a Vision of God for all his children in heaven.* With unclouded eyes— in infinite bliss.

OCULI

Jer. 26, 1-15

This is a true passion text, setting before us the tragic account how Jeremiah was almost slain. It recalls the Savior's word: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee," etc. And the equally significant word of Stephen: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." Acts 7, 52. This text reveals the true nature of sin when it culminates in impenitence and unbelief, and then rejects the Lord and his Word in murderous hate. What almost came upon Jeremiah here did come upon him at last, as tradition reports; he was stoned to death. See the introduction to Jer. 31, 31-34, The First Sunday in Advent, where the prophet's career is briefly reviewed. The text exhibits *man's murderous sin*.

1. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word from the LORD, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD'S house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD'S house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word: 3. If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.

The precise time is not indicated by the text, which mentions only **the beginning of Jehoiakim's**

reign. Yet here we see how this king belonged to the evil party of the priests and false prophets, and refused to listen to the Word of the Lord's true prophet. Here we also have the prelude to the unbelief which afterward rejected the message that the captivity in Babylon would last seventy years, and accepted instead the promises of the false prophets that the first exiles would soon return. **This word from the LORD**, we are told, **came** to the prophet. He received it as something given to him, and transmitted it as not in any way his own, but wholly the Lord's, v. 12. This "word" includes both the contents and the form. It is a plain case of Verbal Inspiration. How this word "came" no man is able to explain, and any theory (rather hypothesis) in regard to the manner is in vain. He who created the prophet's mind and heart never had the slightest difficulty in conveying to both his own thought and will. — Although the prophet has already said that the word he is now about to record came to him from the Lord, the word itself is given the preamble: **Thus saith the LORD**. We are thus made to hear the Lord's own voice as he addresses Jeremiah. — The prophet is told just where and to whom he is to utter what the Lord tells him. He is to take a prominent position in the Temple: **Stand in the court of the LORD'S house**. The court is not named. Keil is right, there is nothing that points to the inner court of the priests; considering the people to whom the prophet is to speak, we are led to think either of the court of the men, or that of the Gentiles where everybody passed or congregated. — **All the cities of Judah** are, of course, the inhabitants of these cities. The addition: **which come to worship in the LORD'S house**, seems to point to some one of the great festival weeks when the men of Judah generally came to the Temple in Jerusalem to go through the festive rites. The Hebrew makes "the Lord's house" the object of "to worship." The

Lord still acknowledged the Temple as his house, although Judah was given to idolatry and sin. He had his plans first for the destruction of this house, v. 6, in judgment, then after the exile he had his plans for its restoration. No unionistic or indifferentistic deductions can be drawn from this acknowledgement of the Temple by the Lord. — The prophet is ordered specifically to utter **all the words that I command thee to speak unto them**; in fact he is ordered: **diminish not a word**. These injunctions are read by some as referring to the Temple address, Jer. 7, 1 etc., which they suppose the Lord wants the prophet to repeat, now to a larger audience, namely “all the cities of Judah.” Here some of the things spoken in that former address indeed are repeated, but that certainly cannot mean a repetition of that former address as such. A comparison will show it at once. Statements like this: “Then will I make this house like Shiloh,” in our text v. 6, and in Jer. 7, 12, are natural repetitions which very likely were made in various connections. The reason why the prophet is ordered not to diminish a word, i. e. to shear or cut off a thing, is not hard to discover, when we consider what dangerous effect the address produced. The prophet, by nature a timid man, is not to think of himself and what may happen to him. *Dabar* is here in the sense of “thing” (point, statement), not in the sense of vocable. Would that every preacher might apply this order of the Lord to himself, like St. Paul in Acts 20, 26-27. So many, in the words of Luther, on occasion at least, shove some word of the Lord, because unpopular at the time, under the bench, i. e. are silent on it as if it were not there.

In v. 3: **if so be** is really “perhaps.” The great purpose of the Lord is thus expressed, namely that Judah may hearken and turn. But it is the purpose of grace, and may be resisted and thus completely nullified, as also happened in this case with Judah.

“If so be” signifies that on the Lord’s part nothing has been omitted. There is no idea here of chance, as men speak of chance. In what the Lord commands the prophet to speak there is all the efficacious grace of the Lord, backed by the certainty of the judgment threatened in the case of obduracy. There is no synergism in “if so be,” as if man of his own power had the ability to consent, as indeed he has the ability in his depraved nature to dissent. “If so be” means: if the *gratia sufficiens* shall attain its end by its divine power. — The purpose of the Lord is marked by three steps: 1) **they will hearken**, i. e. allow the Word to enter their hearts by its divine power; 2) **and turn every man from his evil way**, i. e. in and by the power of the divine Word; 3) **that I may repent me of the evil which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings**. Conversion, *shub*, is the message of the Old Testament prophets. To turn from evil ways signifies the inner turning by true contrition and sorrow of heart. This negative way of saying it always involves the corresponding positive sense, viz. to turn to the Lord for his pardon, and henceforth to follow his will and Word. The Lord “repents” (a decidedly anthropopathic expression) when he withdraws his righteous judgment and in its place extends his grace. Humanly speaking it seems as if he changes his mind and is sorry he has threatened. But in reality all the threats of the Lord are conditional: unless the sinner turns. Here the Lord himself speaks of repenting. He appears as one anxious to repent. This helps us to understand the expression correctly. “The evil” of which the Lord would repent is the threatened destructive judgment. Between the Lord’s purpose, *chashab*, and the execution of that purpose, there is graciously left a period for repentance. Note the participial construction in the relative sentence. The moment man determines on evil in his doings the divine purpose of evil unto that man in just retribu-

tion is formed, and no power of man on earth is able to stay that purpose. The Lord only can reverse the purpose when the sinner turns from his evil doing. For the Lord thus to repent him of the purposed evil is divine absolution for the sinner. When the Lord thus repents he pardons and forgives. "The evil of their doings" is mentioned as the cause of the Lord's displeasure, because these "doings," while outward works, are the public evidence of the godless and unbelieving state of the heart. Before all the world these "doings" justify the judgment of the Lord.

4. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD: If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, 5. To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened; 6. Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth. 7. So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD.

To understand the intent and temper of these words we should note that the Lord had already forbidden Jeremiah to intercede or pray for Judah, Jer. 7, 16. While the entire statement is couched in negative form, and is thus a terrible threat, a positive call to hearken at last ere it be altogether too late underlies this negative. First the impressive preamble, so oft repeated: **Thus saith the LORD.** They have to deal with their covenant Lord, who is bound to carry out his part in punishing them if they will not turn from breaking his covenant with them. Jeremiah is merely the Lord's mouthpiece. — The conditional **if**, while it introduces the negative: **if ye will not hearken to me**, still leaves the door open that by the Lord's grace Judah may hearken.

A. Pfeiffer is right: here the very existence of Judah is at stake, hence the essential condition on which its existence turns must be named, and this is the one requirement "hearken to me." The verb *shama'* means to hear or listen, and in a pregnant statement like this, the hearing is meant of receptive, submissive, trustful hearing. Jeremiah sometimes has "to me" instead of "my voice," in the same sense of hearing with ears and heart, viz. by faith. Not to hearken thus means unbelief, and this when it becomes fixed must entail judgment. — The evidences of not hearkening are now added. For some might claim that they were hearkening to the Lord. We have those to-day who utterly, or at least in part, repudiate the Lord's Word, and yet claim they are hearkening to him. The first evidence is: **not to walk in my law, which I have set before you.** *Leketh*, from *halak*, refers to the conduct and action. "To walk in the law" means to make every action accord with the Torah as the norm. In the addition: "which I have set before you," the Torah is pictured as something fixed and established. But we must remember that Torah means instruction, and even when used of the Pentateuch always includes the Gospel content as well as the legal prescriptions. Let us cease making the old Jews a work-righteous lot by divine requirement, for whom the only way of salvation was the law. They, too, were to hearken in faith, just as we now, and were then to show their faith by their walk and life, just as we now, only they were to observe in their walk the legal requirements as set down for their nation and their time by the Lord. The figure in walking is often extended to include the way or the paths. — There is no connective in v. 5. The asyndeton indicates that the prophetic word and the Torah are not two coordinate entities of equal weight, paired with each other. No, the prophetic word depends on the Torah, is built upon

it, comes to elucidate and unfold the full contents of the Thorah, especially also its promises and covenant blessings. The words: **to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets**, are appositional to the previous expression: "to walk in my law." It was the special business of the prophets to apply the Thorah to the Lord's people, even as Jeremiah was now doing. And part of that business was to warn the people of the terrible consequences of defection from the Thorah, even as the prophet was doing now. 2 Tim. 3, 16. We have the same verb *shama'* here as in v. 4: "hearken to me," and in the same sense, trustful and obedient hearing. The **prophets** are the Lord's **servants** and function only as such. In a sense **the words** they bring are theirs, namely because they speak them, and that willingly, knowing their origin and power, and with complete faith. And let us note that their work was to inculcate the Thorah, to instruct, teach, warn, threaten, and in addition to foretell both in the way of promise and of judgment. But all this without any independence on their part, but as "servants" dependent wholly on their great Lord; so much so that, even as here, they spoke his words though speaking them might mean for themselves abuse, persecution, or even death. We preachers to-day are, mediately, servants of the Lord to speak our words as the Lord's words, with the same faithfulness, truth and courage. — The Lord "set before" Judah his Thorah as something fixed and complete; but of his prophets he says: **whom I sent unto you**, namely as messengers to speak what the Lord thought needful at any particular time. This sending includes the entire office, as well as the particular missions and messages in the execution of that office. The English reads as if the Lord refers to the past, while the Hebrew reads that he is engaged in sending them, now as well as hitherto — Judah has always had the prophetic word abundantly, the Lord has left

nothing undone on his part in the covenant relation. — The *v*^e introduces an apposition: “and that,” not **both**; the Ger. *und zwar*. **Rising up early, and sending them** is anthropomorphic, like a man going about his work eagerly by starting early in the morning. Thus constantly Judah has had the Lord’s prophetic word. — This rising up early receives special weight, when now the Lord states the terrible fact: **but ye have not hearkened**, again the significant *shama’*. *V*^e here is adversative. From the beginning they refused to hear in true faith. The Lord had done everything possible, there is now nothing more that his grace can add. And so the appeal comes with tremendous weight: Will ye not hearken to me at last?

If not, v. 6 declares: **Then will I make this house like Shiloh**. The sanctuary in Shiloh continued from the days of Joshua until those of Eli. Then the ark of the covenant was removed, that sanctuary was devoid of the Lord’s presence, a temple without a god, bound thus to decay and fall into ruin. Compare Ps. 78, 60. The same fate is threatened for the Temple in Jerusalem. The Lord would leave it and it would be destroyed. Read the fuller statement in Jer. 7, 11-15. Note too how Judah trusted in the Temple, while trust in the Lord and his Word was absent. That trust in a mere sacred structure would avail nothing in the day of judgment. Neither sacred buildings, forms and ceremonies, or outward religious acts count in the Lord’s sight, only faith in him and his Word. — The judgment on the Temple shall involve the entire city: **and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth**. The *h* added to *hazzo’thh* may be a soundless suffix added to strengthen the word, as some say: “This here city”; the Masora simply calls it superfluous, Gesenius fails to mention it. *Nathan* (from which here *’eththen*) *liqlalah* = *hin-stellen als Gegenstand des Fluchs*. The sense is not

that Jerusalem when destroyed would act as a curse upon the other nations, but that its fate would be known throughout the nations, and whenever anyone wished to designate a cursed place, or liken such a place to some other by way of illustration, he would mention cursed Jerusalem. The reference here is to the first destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. This curse of the Lord came again A. D. 70, when the Romans destroyed the city. To this day that destruction stands as one of the signal acts of divine judgment in history, and is so mentioned again and again especially in Christian pulpits. There is a terrible paradox in a *holy* city like Jerusalem becoming the symbol throughout the world of the most awful *curse*.

V. 7 reports that Jeremiah duly executed his commission from the Lord. A sample of the attitude of the priests is furnished by 20, 1 etc.; and the character of the false prophets in Jerusalem is shown by 23, 14 etc.; 8, 8-12. We may assume that Jeremiah repeated his message during the days of the festival, thus making all the people to hear. Or, speaking only once before a large assembly in the Temple, his words were repeated by those present to the rest.

8. Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. 9. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

Thus was Jeremiah's warning message received. They did not hearken. There was most likely a kind of riot, led by the priests and false prophets, joined in by the people who followed these evil leaders. How

often does the Lord's Word cause violent disturbance! Jeremiah is treated as a criminal by those who were the real criminals. This also has had many repetitions and always will have. Tell people the unpleasant truth, and they will call you a liar. — The immediate verdict is: **Thou shalt surely die.** This they try to substantiate by their question v. 9: **Why etc., maddu'a,** contracted from *mah-yadu'a, quo cognito?* Jeremiah is asked the reason for prophesying as he did, the assumption on the part of the questioners being that he had no proper reason, i. e. that the Lord had never told him to prophesy thus. — The sense of Jeremiah's word on the curse is quite correctly restated in other words: **this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant.** — Commentators read **all the people** in v. 8 of all those who heard Jeremiah, and **all the people** in v. 9 of a further crowd attracted by the disturbance. But the narrative hardly calls for this distinction. The preposition 'el- means "unto," yet here the gathering of the people was not neutral, or merely curious, but plainly hostile; hence the translation "against" is correct in sense. This double mention of "all the people" connects with the same words in v. 7 and with the similar expression in v. 2. Jeremiah did speak to "all the people," and *all* of them rejected his words. And that right in **the house of the LORD**, where of all places in the world men should be most ready to hearken unto the Lord's words.

10. **When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S house.** 11. **Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.**

As soon as the report about the disturbance in the Temple court reached **the princes of Judah**, and it must have been almost immediately, these officials act. They are the royal judges, chosen from the heads of the people, who judged all legal cases duly brought before them. Here they do not wait for Jeremiah to be brought before them, since the riotous proceeding in the Temple court may result in great public damage. So in a body, as many of them as were present, leave the king's palace where they usually heard cases, and proceed to the Temple and set up their court "in the new gate of Jehovah" ("house" should be omitted from the text). This Jehovah-gate is distinguished as such from the other gates. We may imagine it wider and grander than the other gates, and thus considered more suitable for court proceedings. Gates were the places frequently employed by the Jews for judicial purposes. Here then in this new gate, built most likely by Jotham, 2 Kgs. 15, 35, leading into the inner or upper courts, the trial of Jeremiah was staged. — V. 11 shows the priests and false prophets as the prosecutors who bring and substantiate the charge: **This man is worthy to die**, lit.: "A judgment of death, *mishphat-maveth*, against this man." This is their demand. The grounds for this verdict are tersely summarized: **for he hath prophesied against this city**. That is enough. To say anything against the Temple City was considered a mortal crime. We recall in Jesus' case the persistence of the charge that he had spoken against the Temple; think also of the charge against Stephen. In whose name, and by what right, Jeremiah had prophesied, is not mentioned. Where error and malice control men's hearts in religious strife, we need not expect more than half-truths. — The testimony which in due legal form supports the charge made is at once added: **as ye have heard with your**

ears, namely the multitude packed around the trial judges. Things look tragic for poor Jeremiah.

12. Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. 13. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. 14. As for me, behold, I *am* in your hands: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. 15. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

Jeremiah's defense is a simple statement of the entire truth. He addresses and thus also acknowledges the princes as the rightful judges. So Jesus acknowledged his Jewish judges, the Sanhedrim. But the prophet is not concerned about his own fate, hence he does much more than offer personal defense. Like Jesus at his trial Jeremiah is concerned for his judges and his nation, and therefore reaches out to touch their hearts and consciences. It may be all in vain, as it was in Jesus' case, but the effort of grace goes on to the very last. What the priests and false prophets had purposely omitted Jeremiah emphatically adds, and then repeats at the end (v. 15): **The LORD sent me to prophesy.** That changes the whole case. If accusation is raised and crime is charged, this must be directed against Jehovah himself. So it is always when men raise charges against the preachers of the true Word of God. They may charge the humble human messenger, the charge itself goes against the Lord himself, and he will so account it. — Now come's Jeremiah's hortatory appeal to the entire assembly,

and this is only a repetition in substance of what the Lord himself had said to Jeremiah when he commissioned him on this occasion. Even here in his trial Jeremiah is executing his prophetic office, and the more effectively because he has all the dignitaries of Judah, with the exception of the king, before him. **Therefore now, v'aththah,** is "and now," in the sense: "this is what you should do." In stating what the people of Judah are to do Jeremiah inverts the order in v. 3, he puts the evidences of faith first, and then adds faith (hearken) in the form: **obey the voice of the LORD your God. — Amend your ways and doings,** is really: "make them good," the verb being the hiphil from *yatab*. This change in conduct and life proceeds only from obedience to the Lord's Word. Here again we have *shama'*, see v. 3, 4, and 5: "hearken," and when used pregnantly as here we may translate "obey." And now we have **the voice of the LORD your God.** His voice is always in his Word; when we hear his Word he himself speaks to us. To impress this appeal the more the prophet has the double name *Yaveh 'Eloheykem*, your changeless covenant Lord, the God of might whose power is exercised in your favor ("*your God*"). — To drive the appeal home the promise is added that **the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.** This is exactly what the Lord had said to Jeremiah in v. 3. Even now, with judgment already impending, the door of escape is thus opened. — Not until now does the prophet mention himself. In the whole transaction he counts himself an immaterial side-issue. **As for me,** really: "and I," **behold I am in your hand,** powerless to resist; "do with me as it is good and right (you being judges) in your eyes." Jeremiah's concern was the Lord and the delivering of his full message; his personal interest or fate dared not conflict with that. What a noble example! — This humility and resignation on Jere-

miah's part is not altered by what he adds concerning possible bloodguiltiness on Judah's part. Will they yet add to their sins? While willing and ready to die Jeremiah is unwilling to see added guilt upon his people. Hence the warning, that if the princes consent to the demand of the priests and false prophets innocent blood will be brought upon the city and her inhabitants, blood which the righteous God must avenge. This innocence is fully established by the fact that Jeremiah spoke not of himself, but as sent by Jehoyah. **To speak all these words in your ears** means that at the very least they shall hear these words, whether they hearken to them, believe and obey them, or not. Jeremiah was acquitted. Jesus afterwards was condemned and crucified. But in the prophet's case the character of sin and unbelief stand out with great plainness. God preserved his servant yet a while, but the unbelieving nation went to its doom.

SUGGESTIONS

We conceive the key to this text to be the awful fact that sin is always against God, and in particular against the Word and grace which aim to save from sin. A true definition of sin is opposition to God. This enmity does not show so much when God lets the sinner go on in his course undisturbed. It is bound to show, however, when God comes into contact with sin and the sinner by means of his Word and saving power. Then sin often rises up, impenitent, unbelieving, hardening itself. When this occurs there will be two tragic results. Sin strikes against God in enmity; sin is finally stricken by God in judgment. We see it plainly in the life and death of Jesus, our Savior. When the Pharisees and Sadducees refused to hearken to him, as he preached the law and the Gospel to them and attested himself as the Son of God sent for their salvation, they began to persecute him and then to plan his murder. Repeatedly they tried to kill him, and finally did that very thing. The cross on Calvary shows us the real nature of sin. But this brought down the judgment. Jerusalem was destroyed, the Jewish temple turned into ashes and ruin. What happened

with Jesus was foreshadowed in the prophets, particularly also in Jeremiah and the death that almost came to him as told in our text. Once more he brought to the people of Judah the call of the Lord to hearken, namely, to repent, believe and amend in true obedience. It was one of the last calls of the Lord to Judah. What happened? The wicked priests and false prophets arrested him and pronounced him worthy of death. He was tried as if he were one of the worst criminals. This time indeed he escaped, just as Jesus repeatedly escaped. But the judgment of Judah came. The Lord deserted the Temple, it was burnt, and Jerusalem destroyed, and the whole nation carried into captivity in far-off Babylonia for 70 long years. It is for us to know the true nature of sin and unbelief, so that when the Lord comes to us with his Word and grace we may indeed hearken and believe, and that when we see men go on in their sin and opposition we may know that their judgment is certain.

It remains for the preacher to take this burden of the text, and to shape it in the form of a well-arranged sermon. In doing so we think he should bear one thing in mind, namely, not to abstract, but to stay with the actual story of the text and build his sermon on that. Homiletically this is called "color." The preacher who develops only his abstractions, deductions, or generalizations, loses a very vital element, namely, the concrete case itself and the decisive force which always lies in the actual story or case. This is a prolific source of sermon weakness. It is easy to avoid when one knows how, and yet many seem not only not to know how, but even not to know that they ought to try. Hold fast the entire dramatic story of the text, and the rest will easily take care of itself. If you have the flowing fountain, the stream cannot get away from you.

A careful survey of the text shows several gateways by which we may enter and get the substance of it for the sermon. There is what the Lord says about hearkening, either: "If so be they will hearken," v. 3; or: "But ye have not hearkened," v. 5. There is also what the Lord says about his readiness to repent him of the evil which he had purposed to do to Judah, v. 3 and 13. Then there is the threat: "Like Shiloh," and "a curse to all the nations of the earth," v. 6. Finally we name the verdict of the evil priests and prophets on Jeremiah: "Thou shalt surely die." All these expressions may be turned into themes with distinctive color, each highly concrete, and wide open for the real substance of the text and sermon. Let us take up the first;

The Lord's Final Word to Judah: "If So Be They Will Hearken."

I. There is a way of escape from sin.

Grace — Word — "hearken" or repent and believe — pardon (the Lord will repent him) — sinful Judah could yet be saved — Christ and the Jews of his time — sinners to-day.

II. There is a way to perish in sin.

Judah spurned the word of Jeremiah and tried to kill him — the Jews spurned Christ and crucified him — learn the terrible opposition of sin — and the judgment it brings on itself.

Let us take also the last gateway indicated above:

The Cry against Jeremiah: "Thou Shalt Surely Die!"

I. It reveals sin's opposition to the Lord.

That opposition comes fully to view when the Lord sends his messengers with his Word and grace — some will not hearken, Judah, the Jews in Christ's time, men to-day — then they fight against the Gospel, its messengers, the Church, and the Lord. — Mark well this opposition that none of it may be found in you.

II. It is answered by the Lord's judgment on sin.

The long day of grace, many messengers, door of escape opened again and again — the terror when the day of grace ends: "like Shiloh," "a curse to all the nations," Jerusalem A. D. 70 — secret, and also open and signal judgments on individuals. — Know that the judgment is certain, that you may live and die with grace and pardon.

The Death of Christ Foreshadowed in the Cry against Jeremiah: "Thou Shalt Surely Die!"

- I. He came, like Jeremiah, to bring grace and pardon.*
- II. He was met, like Jeremiah, by unbelief and enmity.*
- III. He was crucified, while Jeremiah was finally stoned.*
- IV. Thus in Christ and Jeremiah the true nature of sin is shown, from which both were sent to deliver.*

LAETARE

Is. 52, 7-10

For the middle of this holy season, the Sunday which bids us rejoice, we have this joyful text on *the salvation wrought by the Lord and sent out through his messengers*. Observe that salvation thus follows hard upon the text on sin. — Our text is from the second triad of Isaiah's second half. This triad, ch. 49-57 deals with the redemption from sin wrought by Christ the great *'Ebed Yahveh* or Servant of Jehovah. Its central section is ch. 53 describing the atoning death of Christ and his saving glorification. This 53rd chapter should really begin with 52, 13, for at this point the great Servant and his work is set before us. The triad ch. 49-57 is divided into three sub-triads: ch. 49-51; ch. 52-54; ch. 55-57. Ch. 52, 1-12 introduces the main topic, namely Christ's work of redemption, 52, 13-53, 12. Thus in the sub-triad ch. 52-54 there are three minor triads: 52, 1-12; 52, 13-53, 12; and 54, 1-17. Our text is part of the second portion of the first of these minor triads. V. 1-6 calls on Jerusalem to put on her beautiful garments, for the Lord will redeem her without money and reveal his great name. Observe this note of redemption right in the start. Ch. 52 shows how wonderfully this redemption was wrought out by Christ. In v. 7-10, our text, messengers appear announcing the return of the redeemed exiles under the kingly leadership of the Lord, and the Lord himself confirms the message. The text is lit up by a whole line of golden terms: good tidings, peace, good tidings of good, salvation, comforted, redeemed, salvation of our God. There is an Old Testament cast to the entire description, for Isaiah speaks of Jerusalem, captives brought

back, and in general has the imagery of a waste city and its restoration. This is the darkened glass through which Isaiah sees the coming great spiritual deliverance: "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God," v. 10. Aug. Pieper is certainly right, when he emphasizes first, that Isaiah goes far beyond any national restoration of Jerusalem, and that those commentators are wrong who read Isaiah in this sense; and secondly, that Isaiah does connect the actual restoration of Jerusalem with the world-wide restoration and redemption of Christ, and that those commentators are wrong who simply spiritualize every local or national reference of the prophet. A true exegesis follows the golden mean. And yet, keeping this balance, Isaiah in this second main triad rises to the clearest heights in depicting Christ's redemptive and royal work. Local and national features, while used, do not dominate. One thing is mighty plain and striking in this respect: neither Babylon nor Koresh (Cyrus) is mentioned in this second main triad — they are wholly dropped. The Servant of Jehovah is the figure that towers in this entire section. So, while there is still the imagery of that ancient time and place, this is wholly secondary; everywhere the spiritual realities shine through, for they are the main thing. Read the introduction to Is. 40, 1-8 for The Third Sunday in Advent.

7. **How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation;**
that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.
8. **Thy watchman shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.**

A great and glorious event is taking place, and here the news of it reaches Zion and Jerusalem. A number of terms, as already stated, are used to describe this event. Let us take the statement in v. 9: "The Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem." But at once we see that it is not meant of mere national reinstatement, for "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." Three dramatic pictures are unrolled for us, each in its way dealing with this great event now described as in progress: 1) the coming of the messenger; 2) the singing of the watchmen at what they see; 3) the joy that is to be in the holy city.—Zion's prisoners are released and are on their way back to Jerusalem. One, or perhaps more messengers, have run far in advance of the approaching captives to announce their coming to the city. These are the features here used by the inspired prophet. There is no direct reference to the captivity in Babylon and its end. Delitzsch speaks of the fall of Babylon. It is quite correct to assume the prophet is using the liberation of the Jews from their long captivity as the prelude to the far greater deliverance effected by Christ, as a type of that deliverance, but at once connecting the antitype, namely Christ's world-wide salvation, with it. So Christ afterwards described the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, both wound and bound together, type and antitype, Matth. 24. For their sins the Jews were made captives in Babylon; so all sin is bondage and captivity. The Lord at last freed the Jews and let them go back to Zion; so Christ frees us from sin by his redemption and leads us to the Zion of the Church and to Jerusalem above. *M^ebasser*, a participle from the piel *bisser* (from *basar*) used as a noun: "him that bringeth good tidings." Some read it as a singular, as our version; others as a collective, and translate it as plural. It is the equivalent of the New Testament

εὐαγγελιστής or εὐαγγελισταί, and is always used of bringing good news: hence Ger.: *Freudenboten*. — **The feet** are mentioned because they carry the swift messenger to those whom his message will delight. The swift coming of the news is the point thus emphasized. And because the news carried is so good to those who receive it, the very feet of the news-bearer, though covered with dust from his rapid run, appear **beautiful**, *na'vu*, niphal from *'avah* (Koenig), “desirable,” and thus “lovely.” The beauty and attractiveness in the feet of the messenger of good lies in the desirableness of his message. — **The mountains** are those about Jerusalem; and the messenger is conceived as crossing their crest. — With a true understanding of Isaiah’s meaning, St. Paul in Rom. 10, 15 quotes the essential words of the prophet as applying to all Gospel messengers who still come to men with the glad news of grace and redemption. He omits “upon the mountains,” but uses: “How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things.” — What has been summarily stated is now specified in detail. First of all: **that publisheth peace**. The verb, from *shama'*, means: to cause to be heard. The messenger brings and announces, **peace**, *shalom*. This is one of the pregnant, weighty words in both Testaments. The Hebrew signifies in Ger. *Unversehrtheit*, the condition of being uninjured, and thus being well, blessed, safe, happy. Especially in thousands of references to God *shalom* is the peace that comes through the Lord’s grace and favor, when he forgives our sins, accepts us as his children, and lets his love pour blessings upon us. The preacher, however, must always note that this “peace” is first of all a condition, an actual fact produced by the Lord, and only in the second place a feeling in our hearts as we experience that peace more or less. The condition is there, whether the feeling is or is not. By the condition the feeling is produced, and where it

perhaps declines, renewed. — The second specification is: **that bringeth good tidings of ~~peace~~**. In the Hebrew there are only two words, *m^ebasser* as in the first line, and then *tob*, another word for what was already called “peace.” The thing announced is so rich and great that it needs more than one term to characterize it. By *tob* it is described as prosperity, and well-being in that direction. It includes good, beneficial, and excellent things. And indeed peace and prosperity are twins. — A still richer and finer term follows in the third specification: **that publisheth salvation**, the verb as in the first specification, but the object now is *y^eshu’ah*, liberation, and thus salvation, namely the actual condition of being freed and saved by an act of the Liberator or Savior. Thus “peace,” “good,” and “salvation” are all *one* thing viewed from three angles. — The final addition: **that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth**, is not a fourth specification, but the real ground on which the three that are named rest. It is because the news can be given that Zion’s God reigns, that there is now the news of peace, good, and salvation. *Malak* means: “he has taken the rule.” The presupposition in the term is that hitherto God allowed the kingdoms of this world to do as they pleased with Israel, leading them away into exile. But now by his work of delivering Israel God has again assumed his reign of grace over Israel, and has taken the reins of world-government into his hands nevermore to relinquish them. Note the possessive “thy God,” whose power and might in royal rule are exerted in Zion’s favor. — **Zion**, originally the Temple hill, came to designate the worshippers in that Temple, and is thus synonymous with “Jerusalem” as a like designation for the people. We have already indicated that the deliverance that came for Israel is used here as a type for the salvation through Christ reaching to the ends of the earth.

V. 8 takes us a step farther. We have seen the beautiful feet of the messenger scaling the hills in running with his great good news to Jerusalem. By a dramatic change the scene shifts, and we now listen to the watchmen: **Thy watchmen shall lift up** (or: lift up) the voice. The first *qol* is used like an exclamation: "Hark!" and the second *qol* is the object of *nas^eu*: "the watchman lift up the voice." Our English uses the first *qol* as the object of *nase^eu*, and the second as modifying *y^eranenu*, but the second statement is simply: "they sing together." At sight of the messenger bearing good news Zion's watchers, stationed on her walls, break out in joyful song. They sing as one man, *yachdav* (A. Pieper). There is no reason to follow Delitzsch in making *tsophim* the prophets, a rather strange idea. — The cause for their united singing is: **they shall see** (rather: "they see") **eye to eye, when** (rather: "how") **the LORD shall bring again** ("brings again") **Zion**. A. Pieper translates: "how the Lord returns home to Zion." In the coming of the bearer of good news these watchmen see close at hand, as close as when one man looks into the eyes of another, the Lord's gracious return to Zion. The verb *ra'ah* with *b^e* means to look upon something. The idea in the entire verse is beautiful as well as highly dramatic. As the messenger arrives and delivers his good news, the watchmen already see, as if right before their eyes, the Lord himself leading the captives home. *Shub* may be causative: "bring Zion home," as the translations usually have it. But the thought is certainly richer, since it all centers in the Lord himself, to translate intransitively: "the Lord returns home to Zion," as A. Pieper proposes. Note that thus again all the descriptions of the good news center in the Lord himself. When he comes as *Yahveh*, then there is peace, good, salvation. But when he is gone men may cry peace, etc., but there will be none.

9. **Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.**
10. **The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations: and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.**

First the messenger, then the watchmen, and now the city itself: But: **ye waste places of Jerusalem**, are the ruins, and they comprise the entire city. When God gave the city over to judgment it was laid waste with fire and sword. Now grace and deliverance are once more turned to Jerusalem, and in anticipation all her ruins are bidden: **Break forth into joy, sing together.** The two imperatives, side by side, unconnected, are decidedly emphatic: *phitschu, rannenu*: "break out, jubilate." The jubilation is because of the wonderful restoration that is now to follow. Of course, there is an outward side to it all, actual ruins, actual new buildings and walls. But even so and for that city itself as a city there was a deep spiritual basis for the restoration. It is this that we must note in its application to ourselves and the restoration wrought by Christ. — This spiritual, intangible, but heavenly real side is brought out in stating the reason for the jubilation urged upon Jerusalem: **for the LORD hath comforted his people.** A. Pieper thinks this is meant physically, not spiritually. Why? Because it parallels *ga'al*, "hath redeemed," and Pieper thinks this must be physical. But physical comforting would consist in food, drink, housing, luxury. Can that be meant here by *nicham*, "hath comforted," when we have heard of peace, good, and salvation, etc.? No, comfort is for the heart, and Jerusalem heard comforting words from the Lord, 40, 1 etc., and these words are now turned into deeds.

This comfort, when now Israel actually experiences the sweetness of grace and forgiveness, is the prelude to the great comfort Christ gave us, when he told his disciples: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you," John 14, 18.—The same thing applies to the parallel statement: **he hath redeemed Jerusalem.** *Ga'al* certainly means "to redeem," buy back or demand back; see also the derivatives. It ought to go without saying that in the Old Testament there was indeed a plain physical side to the act, for Jerusalem arose from its ruins. But again, the basis of this was wholly spiritual, grace, pardon, new reception into sonship and covenant relation. And this was the vital thing, even as it is now in Christ's redemption made ours by faith, whether now there be any physical outward signs of grace connected with it all or not.

V. 10 is an expansion of what v. 9 contains. The redemption and deliverance of Jerusalem is full of significance in another and broader way: **The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations.** His **arm** is, of course, his power and might. But his **holy arm** is the might which he exercises in holiness, i. e. in opposition to all sin. **He hath made bare** this arm of his, as an ancient warrior bares his right arm to the shoulder the better to wield his weapon. When the Lord forsook Jerusalem and let the enemies triumph over it, Jehovah's arm seemed covered and inactive. Now that is changed. **In the eyes of all nations** refers to a deed of omnipotence against Israel's foes so great that the nations all shall see and mark it. The reference is to the fall of Babylon. There is no earthly kingdom, power, or influence which is able to stand and abuse the Lord and his Church one moment longer than the arm of the Lord permits. Let preachers rid themselves of the secret notion, a kind of hidden unbelief, that the Church must compromise with this or that evil because

it is too great to oppose uncompromisingly. Babylon fell, little Jerusalem was built up from ruin. — The final statement should not be passed by without even a remark, as commentators do: **and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.** One is reminded vividly of Acts 1, 8: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost parts of the earth." Here again we have the significant term *y^eshu'ah*, **salvation**, recalling the very name "Jesus," Savior. Say what one can on Jerusalem's salvation becoming known among the ancient nations (and her story was wonderful enough to have spread far), this word about the earth-ends seeing the salvation of God has its real and complete fulfillment only in Christ and his world-wide Gospel. **Our God**, as we have noted in previous texts, marks him as exerting his power in our behalf.

SUGGESTIONS

A good descriptive passage occurs in *Sermon Sketches on Old Testament Eisenach Texts*, p. 58, by Geo. Hein: "Projecting himself into the future, taking his stand among the few Jews who have been left in Jerusalem, and who have not been carried off to Babylon with the great majority, Isaiah in spirit walks amid the ruins of the Holy City. Hardly a house stands intact. Stumbling along a street full of stones and debris of various kinds, he comes to the place where his father lived, where he was born. A heap of ruins greets him. Tender memories are awakened. With difficulty he holds back the tears. He thinks of relatives and friends in far-off Babylon. Are they still among the living? Do they fare well? But here is the Temple. It was on this spot. He recognizes some parts of the building. He, too, had been glad when they said unto him, Let us go into the house of the Lord. He had worshipped here in the beauty of holiness. He falls down on his knees and breathes a prayer. Then back to his little hovel, with its scanty fare and comforts."—Descriptions like this are better when they weave in some of the great inner realities. Here these would be Israel's sin and the divine wrath that had made Jerusalem a city of ruins. Better still would be, to carry such

description woven through as indicated, on through the sermon. That would be fine indeed. In our text the dramatic introduction of the messenger and the watchman, and the call for waste Jerusalem to sing, really invite such treatment.

As in so many of these texts, when it comes to skeletonizing next to no helps are available — it is practically virgin ground. A. Pfeiffer thinks he dare use themes like the following: "Today salvation has come to this house"; "They saw no man, save Jesus only," Matth. 17, 8; "Do good unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem," Ps. 51, 18. The trouble is that themes (and also parts) drawn from striking expressions in other passages of Scripture always bring those passages so strongly to mind that the hearer thinks the preacher is really preaching on that other passage, and only referring to his text. No, if we want to use a striking biblical expression as the theme, we ought to use some such expression from the text itself. Rather use some other form of theme than to import a theme from a different passage. But in our text we have several choice themes: "How beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings"; the great news for Zion: "Thy God reigneth!" "When the Lord shall bring again Zion"; and "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." What more in this line could any preacher want?

Aside from the matter of the form of the theme, two exceptional features deserve to be noted and used in this text: first, the rich Gospel terms it contains; secondly, the dramatic cast of the text itself. Take for instance the great theme:

Zion, "Thy God Reigneth!"

I. Hear the messenger bringing the good news!

- 1) He announces peace, good, salvation.
- 2) He meant all these as the result of God's reign of grace.
- 3) It was the prelude to Christ's still greater and eternal reign of grace and redemption.

II. Hear the watchman shouting out the good news!

- 1) They pass the message on, and see the Lord himself bringing back Zion's captives.
- 2) That was what the Lord's reigning meant for Zion and Jerusalem.
- 3) It was the prelude to the great procession of redeemed and rescued sinners brought to the Church by the Redeemer Christ.

III. Hear the whole city of Jerusalem singing for joy!

- 1) Once laid waste by God's wrath she is now comforted and happy.
- 2) That is what the arm of the Lord means, restoring, exalting, blessing, and defending her.
- 3) It was the prelude to the spiritual restoration and prosperity of Christ's holy Church, in which we to-day sing for joy.

"All the Ends of the Earth Shall See the Salvation of Our God."

- I. It began when grace and peace came to captive Zion of old.*
- II. It was completed when Christ brought redemption and salvation to a world of sinners.*

The Good Tidings That Came to Zion are Still the Best Tidings in the World.

For they publish 1) Redemption; 2) Salvation; 3) Peace; 4) Comfort; 5) Good, 6) All these by the reign of God's grace and might.

JUDICA

Numbers 21, 4-9

A text on the Lord's redemption and salvation is very properly followed by one on faith, for only by faith are both made personally our own. In this text faith is put into a true Lenten setting. The sinners here shown are stricken by the punishing hand of the Lord. But there is set up before them one of the great types of Christ. And the one promise connected with that type centers in an act of faith. *Judica calls the stricken sinners to believe.* Yes, faith is wonderful indeed. Kindled by divine promise, consisting of nothing but trust in that promise, it saved from deadly serpent poison, and still saves from all the poison of sin and death.

4. And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

It was because the children of Israel did not believe that they were turned back from the southern borders of Canaan, instead of passing at once directly into the promised land. Years of trying desert travel took them slowly and painfully down the mountainous west side of Edom back almost to the sea again, and then on up the eastern borders of Edom past the Dead Sea and to the crossing of the lower Jordan River. The Edomites would not let the host cross their country in a short-cut to the same point of approach at the Jordan. Ex. 13 and 14; 20, 14 etc. On this long journey the whole host of these unbelievers gradually died, only Joshua and Caleb

were allowed to enter, and these two had believed. Our text takes up the journey from mount Hor on to the south, Israel thus for many a weary day traveling literally away from the promised land. Not till the lower tip of Edom was reached did the northward journey begin again. This is what unbelief did for Israel. The country is arid, mostly a sandy waste with but little vegetation, in places heaped with granite boulders and rock masses. Somewhere along this weary journey **the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.** *Thiqtsar nephesh* means to be impatient. Literally *qatsar* means "to be short," i. e. patience does not hold out. Vilmar put it aptly: "The soul of this people was too short for this long way." What there was about "the way" that produced the impatience is indicated in what follows.

5. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. 6. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

The impatience resulted in an overt act: the people **spake against** God, and against Moses, *dahar b^e*, which may signify "against." *'Elohim* is used here, because it seems the covenant relation was not intended to be indicated. His power and providence are taken to be back of the plight of the people. And **Moses** is named as the representative of God in the way they were led. — A brief statement as to the contents of what was thus spoken is added: **Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?** The verb is the hiphil from *'alah*, and without the vowel points might be read either as a singular or a plural; it is pointed to read

plural "ye," though some of the Septuagint texts have "thou" (Moses). Even if the murmuring was directed against Moses, it certainly involved God. Note that the people here ascribe their being brought up out of Egypt to God and his agent Moses. It was a mighty deliverance, but now the blinded eyes of the multitude, always inclined unto unbelief, no longer see that. They talk in an aggrieved way about being brought from Egypt, instead of praising God for that deliverance. "To die in the wilderness" ("for dying") assumes that this was the purpose of God and Moses. They were indeed to die thus, and many died right at this place. But the cause was not the original intention of God in any way, but their own sin and the punitive justice of God called forth by that sin. They blame God, when they should blame only themselves. Unbelief always finds some reason or other for blaming God, whereas repentance acknowledges and confesses its own sins. There is hope for the people who repent and believe, none for the unbeliever. — The reference to dying is supported by what the people think will bring them death, namely starvation in this foodless desert: **for no bread, neither water**, these the brief Hebrew words, which our English must amplify. There was, of course, no cereal bread, and there must often have been a lack of water. But with the Lord leading them, all they needed was to trust him and call on him, and they would certainly be provided for. It is the voice of unbelief which looks only at the desert, and not at God, and then says it sees "no bread, neither water." So on an occasion Jesus' disciples saw only a few cakes of bread and a couple of fishes, and never took account of Jesus at all. — Now, the fact was that the people were provided with food, namely the manna, which was sweet like biscuit and honey, and which could be prepared in a variety of ways. Besides, the daily miracle of the manna was food for the faith in their souls, calling

for daily thanksgiving that they were so directly fed by the hand of God. But the unbelieving hearts of these people speak in a derogatory way about the manna: **our soul loatheth this light bread.** *Q'loqel*, derived from *qalal*, signifies *minderwertig*, "light" in the sense of being "of little or no value." Hence *qatsah* (*qats*), their souls (persons) "loathe" this divinely given food. It turns their stomachs. They imply that that is the kind of food God is serving them. This ugly accusation they offer him in place of gratitude and trust. They intend to say, that since they cannot eat the manna, because it nauseates them, and since there is no other food to be had here far away from human habitation in a sandy waste, they are all doomed to die. And this, they say, seems what God from the first intended. Thus their unbelief literally makes a kind of monster out of God.

What answer could the Lord make to people like that? Kindly words, persuasion, further measures of grace, would all be out of place, because they could not cure the evil in their hearts. The Lord used his own way, namely a severe rod. Yet not the rod (law) only, but he added help from the blows of the rod (Gospel). And the real design of the Lord was to teach faith, and by faith drive out this deadly and killing unbelief. In v. 7 Moses writes **the LORD**, where a moment ago he wrote "God" in regard to the murmuring people. It seems as if he meant to convey to us that the people forgot their covenant relation when they murmured, but when God dealt with them he did so holding fast on his part that covenant relation. For remember, that in the original covenant there was the provision of how the Lord would deal with those who broke his covenant. Every disciplinary and punitive measure against Israel was thus in accord with the covenant provision. As for the other nations God simply let them go their own way. The Lord **sent fiery serpents among the people**; not that

they had a fiery look, but that the poison of their bites burned like fire. *Nachash*, snake, is here defined by *saraph*, also snake, but derived from the verb "to burn." This sudden appearance of a host of serpents is to be understood as due to miracle. That answers the question where all these serpents came from. Nor are we ready, in a fashion, to reduce the miracle by imagining that in some mysterious way all these serpents from an area round about invaded the camp of the Israelites. — This infliction was deadly: **they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.** They had talked of dying in the wilderness, now indeed they died. They had talked of the slow death of starvation, now they had a quicker death by fiery poison. But the worst of it was they died because of their unbelief and in their unbelief. When masses of people go off in unbelief some, perhaps many, are bound to perish spiritually. Which ones these will be no man can tell in advance, since this belongs to the inscrutable will of God, into which man pries at his own terrible risk.

7. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. 8. And the LORD said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. 9. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

Note the contrast, first Moses is blamed, now he is besought. The rod must strike hard in aiding the law before some people admit their sin. When the people confessed to Moses: **We have sinned**, it was

under duress of their punishment. Now that kind of confession may serve as a beginning, as also we see the Lord in this case accepting it. It is like a first step in the right direction. But it should lead farther, namely to an intelligent and voluntary confession, deepened especially by the clear recognition of grace against which one has sinned. The Hebrew *chata'* is the true counterpart to the Greek New Testament ἀμωρτία, "sin" in the sense of missing the mark. That mark is set by God in his law, and to miss the mark thus set, in thought, word, or deed, is sin. But *chata'* carries with it a second thought, namely to become laden with guilt, and this should be added. To say: I have sinned, thus constitutes a verdict of the sinner upon himself. He admits both the wrong as a fact, and the guilt of the wrong, i. e. the justice of his own punishment, whether as actually inflicted or as due to be inflicted. "And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds," Luke 23, 41. — The sin is specified here, which is also a good thing for the sinner: **for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee.** Note that here the title *Yaveh* occurs: against our covenant Lord. This name implies that the people feel they should have trusted the Lord and been true to their covenant relation; instead they have openly turned against him and against the mediator who represented him. — With such a preamble, the following humble prayer is properly introduced. Moses is now asked to exercise his mediatorial function: **Pray unto the LORD that he take away the serpents from us.** It is not wrong to ask the Lord to be delivered from a punishment he has been constrained to send upon us because of our sins. For one of the marks of returned grace is the cessation of the punishment. Yet there are some things to note. First, to try only to escape the punishment is not real repentance in any sense. The malefactor on Christ's left had wanted only that. The sin as

sin and as against the Lord must be confessed. Secondly, the return of grace sometimes allows the infliction to continue, not indeed now as punishment or sign of wrath, but as discipline and thus a sign of disciplinary love. In the case of the Israelites the Lord did not at once remove the plague of serpents, but made a way of escape from death through the medium of faith and trust. **And Moses prayed for the people.** Yes, they needed their mediator now. What a good thing they had him.

The answer of the Lord is certainly wonderful in every way. He might have let the serpents all die suddenly, or disappear strangely as strangely they had come. He does far more. He provides for the hearts of these people what they needed above all, needed more than to be cured of the serpent bites, namely faith. And this he does by arranging a strange deliverance, one that looked far into the future, namely to Christ lifted up high on the cross of Calvary. It is the covenant LORD who bids Moses: **Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole.** Here only *saraph* is used. Naturally a manufactured snake could only look fiery. A great deal of idle speculation has been vented on this serpent. Rightly the Book of Wisdom, 16, 6 etc. calls it a *σύμβολον σωτηρίας*, symbol of salvation, and that "not because of the act of looking, but because of the Savior of all." But notions, that like cures like, that the ancients viewed the serpent as a symbol of blessing (a pagan, not a biblical idea), and other such explanations are certainly worse than useless. Luther gives us the true idea: "In the first place, the serpent which Moses had to make at God's command, had to be of brass or copper, that is reddish, and altogether (though without poison) similar to those who, having been bitten by the fiery serpents, were red and burned with heat. In the second place, the brass serpent had to be lifted up upon a pole as a sign. In the third place, those

who wanted to recover from the fiery snake-bite and live, had to look upon the brass serpent erected upon a pole, otherwise they could not recover and live." Sermon on John 3, 1-15. In other words this brass serpent is typical, as Jesus very clearly sets forth in John 3, 14. This brass serpent has the form of the other serpents, but is wholly without their poison, and, as Luther puts it, "without poison and in all respects harmless." So was God's Son sent in the form of sinful flesh, and yet wholly without sin, Rom. 8, 3; 2 Cor. 5, 21; Heb. 4, 15. The erection on a pole is a sort of triumphant display of the deadliness of the fiery serpent abolished in the brass serpent, and thus typical of Christ's victory on the cross over all sin. Then the final feature: **and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.** This means faith, and is thus an image and picture of all true saving faith in Christ. All that was necessary was to believe the promise of the Lord concerning the brass serpent, and by acting on it show that faith. To be sure wise fellows among the Israelites might have argued: How can looking at a brass serpent stuck up on a pole cure poisonous snake-bites? Reason, science, philosophy, human experience with snakes and poisons all have no answer, save that it could not possibly cure. And yet there stood the promise, inviting to faith, calling for it, coaxing it out. And there was the flaming, burning wound of the serpent, the poison creeping to the heart, and the deadly danger pushing on to believe that promise. It was the Lord who arranged it all thus. Faith was and is essential. And it is so with Christ on the cross. In him all the Gospel promise centers. Reason, science, philosophy, may contradict as they please. There is the promise calling out faith, and there is our sin and death warning us not to delay faith. — Moses did as the Lord directed him. And the promise proved true. Merely

looking at the brazen serpent healed those bitten, and they lived. — The brazen serpent was carried by the Israelites into Canaan and preserved till the time of Hesekia, who broke it up because the people burnt incense before it in idolatrous fashion, 2 Kgs. 18, 4.

SUGGESTIONS

The great commentary on this text is Christ's word: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3, 14-15. If the main emphasis is placed on *faith*, this text will present no special difficulty. Note how Christ stresses believing in the passage cited. But both old and new preachers love to stress a likeness between the brazen serpent and Christ; not merely in this that both were lifted up (Christ stresses that), but in what both themselves are. There are warnings against making the brazen serpent an actual type of Christ, from other preachers and commentators. We are told that Christ resembled those whom he helped, while the brazen serpent resembled the serpents that caused the need of help. Luther evaded this disparity by making the fiery serpent resemble the fiery red places on the bodies of those bitten. Yet, we think, one may go a step farther, for the Scriptures themselves say that Christ was in the likeness of sinful flesh, was made sin, and a curse for us. Jesus does not go that far in his conversation with Nicodemus, but that says nothing about other Scripture statements. So one may accept an outline like that by Stosch:

The Brazen Serpent a Prophecy of the Cross of Christ.

- I. In the lifting up of the serpent.*
- II. In the image of the serpent.*
- III. In the healing effect.*

Others, like Koegel, an excellent preacher, have followed this line of treatment:

The Type of the Brazen Serpent Fulfilled in the Son of Man.

We consider:

- I. The wounded; II. The One lifted up; III. The saved.*

This is simple and very good, combining the Old and New Testament throughout. We add the outline by Steinbauer:

The History of the Brazen Serpent in the Light of Fulfillment.

- I. *An image of God's wrath because of sin.*
- II. *An image of merciful love for sinners.*
- III. *An image of those saved by grace.*

Now all these outlines operate with the brazen serpent and its counterpart Christ as the central point of the sermon, which of course may be done. Yet in this kind of treatment faith is not made overly prominent. This text, however, it seems should stress *faith* especially. This is the peculiar feature of the text. Think of it, the bitten people were merely to look, and that would make them live. It required trust in the promise to go and take that look; that is how looking meant believing. Reason might argue very cogently against looking. Mere looking—science knows of no cure by such means when it comes to deadly poison. How could looking counteract the poison already spreading in the blood? Well, all this is the very point to be brought out in this sermon. We must quit reasoning, and believe. We must junk philosophy and trust the Gospel promise. We must confidently do just what God bids us do, and he will take care of the rest, whether we understand it all or not. So we like Claudius Freseman's theme: **Look and Live!** although we think his parts might be better: *I. Look to yourself; II. Look to Christ.* He has, as one can easily see, divided on "look," rather on its objects; and has himself, in his division at least, overlooked "live." Let us take his theme and divide differently:

Look and Live!

- I. *To reason that seems foolish.*
- II. *Yet it was the Lord's command and promise.*
- III. *It was intended wholly for faith.*
- IV. *And it certainly saved.*

Or, following another line:

- I. *That means a promise.*
- II. *That means divine power and grace.*
- III. *That means faith, pure and simple.*
- IV. *That means joy and praise in the end.*

These outlines adhere to the text story, the Israelites in the desert dying from fiery serpent bites. The application to sinners in general and to Christ as their deliverance through faith must be added in the elaboration. This application, however, may be worked into the outline itself, which some may prefer:

The Brazen Serpent Teaches Us the Power of Faith in Jesus Christ.

- I. As the Israelites had to look in faith upon the brazen serpent to be saved.*
- II. So we now must look in faith on Christ crucified to be saved.*

PALM SUNDAY

Zech. 9, 8-12

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are the three prophets of the restoration, the former two at the beginning of the period, the latter at the end. Haggai and Zechariah encouraged Zerubbabel and Jeshua amidst the apathy of the younger generation who were accustomed to the absence of the Mosaic ritual in Babylon, and so after a delay of fourteen years building operations on the Temple were resumed. Zechariah himself tells us exactly when his prophetic work began. Born in Babylon he came back a young man with the exiles. He was of priestly descent, and himself head of a priestly family. There has been much dispute about the second half of his book, as though it could not have been written by him, namely ch. 9-14. No data are recorded naming when and for what special reason these prophecies were uttered. There is a difference in style, but one natural to the contents as compared with the earlier chapters. The moment we grant that ch. 9-14 may have been written at a different, perhaps considerably later time, and that special local circumstances are not involved in them, there is absolutely no ground for denying the authorship of Zechariah. In fact, these chapters seem to be the later calm reflection of the prophet under divine Inspiration regarding the nine visions in the first half of his book, setting forth their sense more fully for the people. Here are threats against their enemies, the promise of the wonderful King to come, and the reunion of the separated tribes, and here are glimpses into the far future and into the consummation of the Lord's kingdom. Many of these passages

are among the most glorious in Hebrew prophecy. — To be sure, if Inspiration is denied, and Zechariah is made to write only what his own mind and ability was able to collect, then one may well wonder whether he wrote these last chapters. Then, for instance, the mention of Judah and Ephraim in ch. 10 could not be explained from the situation at that day; and other features likewise. See Meusel *Kirchl. Handlexikon*, art. *Sacharja*, for a good discussion. The preacher should be settled on this critical question, because our text is included in the section in dispute. Reu sums the matter up, when in agreement with Delitzsch he not only rejects any time prior to the exile for these chapters, but with Hofmann, Koehler, Kliefoth, Keil, Lange and Bredenkamp holds that there is only one author for the entire book, since only on this basis can one do justice to the last section, and any difference in style of writing is due to difference in subject.

We are in the years following the exile. The Lord had indeed proved himself a Deliverer. Yet things were very humble and poor in those days. The people might think that after all they were trusting in a mere shadow. Here Zechariah rises up and in ch. 9-14 unfolds the future with its divine promises and glories. The foes of Judah are still powerful, but 9, 1-7 tells the people that this shall cease. Then follows our text telling of the great King to come, his wonderful character and his blessings. And so the comforting prophecy goes on.

8. And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.

A closer translation would be: "And I will encamp for the good of my house as a watch." It is a question of vowel points, whether *mittsabah*, as the

Masora has it, is *tsaba'* with *he* instead of final *aleph*; or just the word *matsabah*, a watchpost or guard. Most expositors decide on the latter. "For the good of my house" should be read as referring to the Temple, or in a wider sense to Jerusalem. Keil makes it God's kingdom; others, the holy land or the nation, because no oppressor was to pass through any more. But the latter reference holds good equally when we think of Jerusalem. — **Because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth**, means any one coming through and returning again, but of course hostile and domineering forces. — For at once we have the explanation: **and no oppressor shall pass through them any more**, *noges* from *nagas*, "to drive." — And the reason for this determination is added: **for now I have seen with mine eyes**. This in a way sounds strange. Yet, when God turned away from Judah it seemed as if he paid no attention to what became of her, how her enemies maltreated her, and how wretched she herself became. When then the Lord turned in grace to Judah, it did seem as if he came in person, saw the actual condition of things, and acted accordingly. It is a human way of describing the personal interest which God's love takes. — The promise here given was fulfilled only in a very limited sense for Jerusalem of old. That promise reached out to the Jerusalem of the new covenant, concerning which Christ himself assured Peter that even the gates of hell should not prevail against it. Not that the Christian Church has not suffered persecution and much opposition in the world. The point is: she was never devastated and destroyed: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," Matth. 28, 20. The Lord has encamped around the Church like a watch. And this is true of individuals as well as of the Church as such. We now can be assured of the Lord's personal nearness and protection

every day and night, in danger, and especially also in death. Ps. 23, 4.

9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

It is, of course, because of this verse that our text is chosen for Palm Sunday, for the fulfillment, Christ's regal entry into Jerusalem on that memorable Sunday before his death, has made this prophecy and promise by the mouth of Zechariah the only Old Testament text for the day. — **O daughter of Zion**, just like **O daughter of Jerusalem**, is not the daughter belonging to Zion, as though "Zion" and "daughter" were two and different. While *bath* is the construct, this relation covers also certain appositions. So here: Zion herself is the "daughter," personified as "daughter" in the usual oriental fashion; Jerusalem is the "daughter" in the same way. The two names, together with the two imperatives, are intended as a duplication for emphasis. *Gili* = keep turning for joy; and *hari'i* = cry aloud (from *ru'a*). The action is of a happy child dancing in circles for joy, and at the same time exclaiming. Zechariah writes as if the King were coming at that moment. We may say he actually sees the coming. So real is it in his prophetic vision. We know that this rejoicing did take place, when the multitude that came with Jesus and the other multitude that went to meet Jesus sang their hosannas and made their joyful demonstration. — **Thy king** is with special meaning. Judah had many kings, but this was that special King promised as the great Deliverer, the eternal Ruler, in whom all the Lord's promises and all Judah's hopes centered. There never would be a king like this King. Zion and Jerusalem had especial reason for

joy, for this King was of their blood, sent to them first of all, doing his glorious work in their midst, with them to receive and possess all his blessings in the very first place. — That is what lies in **cometh unto thee**, *lak*, not a *dat. comm.*, but for *'elayik*, “unto thee.” So he actually came that Palm Sunday over the road from Bethany. — And now he is described: first as **just**, *tsaddiq*, which always means in accord with the norm of right, this agreement with the norm pronounced in a verdict by the competent judge, who here must be God himself. There is no restriction here, hence we ought to impose none of our own, whether it be the King's character and person, or the cause he represents. The only directive we have lies in his office as King. As a ruler, in all that he is and does as such, he is *tsaddiq*. Of course, his people will receive the benefit of his being just. Luther writes: *Justus est, qui justificat*. Yes, in his justifying and pronouncing poor sinners just through faith in him, he is our just King. His being just climaxes in this act of his. — The next line in the picture is highly expressive: *nosha'*, a participle niph'al, passive in sense. The translation: **having salvation**, is liable to be misunderstood, as though this King has saving power and salvation in his possession to bring to us who need it. That would accord with Luther's rendering: *ein Helfer, salvator*. But the word means *salvatus*, one who himself has been helped and rescued. God delivered him from great distress and deadly conflict, and gave him salvation and victory. This King who comes to Jerusalem, as Reu puts it, has a history behind him, he has passed through a terrible conflict in which he needed the divine assistance and received it in fullest measure. He bears the scars of the conflict on his countenance. As one who has thus achieved the victory he comes to Jerusalem. “He was taken from prison and from judgment.” Is. 53, 8. Now, of course, the conflict and battle

in which this King was delivered concerned not himself alone, but in particular Zion and Jerusalem and us all. Coming thus as a victor, *salvatus*, he certainly comes also for Jerusalem and us as *salvator*, to let us all share in his victory. So, while Luther's translation "a helper" is not literally correct, it still contains the application we should make of *nosha'* as applied prophetically to Christ. Just as *tsaddiq* ultimately has a reference to us: the righteous King who exercises his righteousness in justifying us sinners by faith, so *nosha'* has a final reference to us: the King delivered, in order that through him we, too, may be delivered. This correct conception of the Hebrew term, however, indicates that we should not restrict our view of his coming to Jerusalem too narrowly to the historic entry in Jerusalem. Christ's battle had indeed been partly fought at that date, and God had delivered him; but the greatest part of the conflict came the following Friday. In the prophetic vision all that happened in Gethsemane, on Calvary, and in Joseph's garden is included. While the signal fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy on Palm Sunday in Christ's regal entry into Jerusalem must be emphasized, the picture of the King entering the Holy City must include all the features of his victorious battle in which God crowned him with victory and triumph. — The third element in this picture of the King enhances the two previous ones. But *'ani* must be correctly understood. It is a derivative, like *'anav*, of the verb *'anah*, in the qal "to be bowed down," niph'al and hithpael "to humble oneself." Many have read the term here as "poor" (Luther), humble, afflicted, oppressed, and like Hengstenberg have included the entire lowly, miserable, suffering condition of Christ's state of humiliation described in Is. 53. But this is out of line. How could Jerusalem rejoice at the coming of such a King? While we of the New Testament know that Christ was made poor for our

sakes that we might be made rich in him, it would have been difficult for the Old Testament saints to understand that they had cause for rejoicing at the coming of a poor, afflicted, oppressed King. The LXX translates 'ani with $\pi\epsilon\alpha\upsilon\varsigma$, *sanftmütig* (Koenig, naming our passage), mild, soft, gentle, meek. Here this is evidently the true meaning. This King comes as one who in his suffering has learned gentleness, meekness, and mildness. He himself has passed through battle and suffering, and God delivered him; and now he comes in his victory with a heart full of mildness and mercy towards us. This was cause indeed for Jerusalem to rejoice. No stern King is this, domineering and harsh, to oppress and abuse his people, but a King whose gentle, kindly heart will draw all men unto him. In the two Hebrew terms for "having salvation" and "lowly" we really have what Hebrews 5, 7-9 contains: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. . . . And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"; and v. 2: "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Only Hebrews describe Christ as High Priest, while Zechariah describes him as King.—The fourth feature in the description is a participial clause: **riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.** The "and" is explicative: "namely upon a colt" etc. The plural *athonoth* is the plural of category: a colt, such as *asses* foal; lit. "the foal of asses." The reason why Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass has not always been understood. Calvin thought that this riding only emphasized his humility and lowliness. We see that this is beside the mark. Hengstenberg thinks the lowliness is even augmented in that Jesus rode a colt

not yet trained. But it is quite evident that he could just as well have obtained an older and well-trained beast if he had desired. Besides who could have told that for such a reason Jesus rode a colt? The horse, and especially the stallion, is the beast of war, whereas the ass is markedly the beast of peace (see Gen. 49, 11). This, of course, has nothing to do with the temper of the beasts, as Keil foolishly thinks, but with the use to which men put these animals. Now all the Messianic pictures of the coming kingdom make this a kingdom and rule of peace. So Zechariah, describing the King riding on an ass, remains true to the Old Testament prophetic imagery. And the colt is significant, not as emphasizing any humility, but almost the reverse: it was fitting that this King as a king should use an animal that no one else had as yet used. Compare Mark 11, 2: a colt "whereon never man sat," and cases like Num. 19, 2; Deut. 21, 3; 1 Sam. 6, 7. Jerusalem is to rejoice, because this coming King will seek his glory not in war, but will shower upon his people the blessings of peace. This King will be a true Solomon for Jerusalem, a Prince of peace for the City of peace. John 14, 27; 20, 19. Compare the author's New Gospel Selections, p. 445.

10. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even unto sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. 11. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.

Here the kingdom of this wonderful King is described, in particular its character and its extent. Instead of addressing Zion and Jerusalem directly as in v. 9, the Lord here simply declares the things that will be. Is. 2 and Micah 4 help us to see that here the

erection of the divine kingdom of peace is promised. It matches this King, who riding upon an ass, displays his peaceful character; yet riding a foal never ridden before, displays his sacred and divine character. As a kingdom of peace there will be no need in it, as in common earthly kingdoms, of **the chariot**, of war, or of **the horse** for soldiers and battle. *Rekeb* is seldom used of a single wagon or chariot; usually it means detachment of wagons, namely such as are used in war. The plural "chariots" would be a good translation. So also *sus* is often collective: "horses," "steeds." Among the Israelites they were imported, as Koenig states in his *Woerterbuch*, by Solomon, and were opposed by the later prophets as part of the military equipment and a symptom of Israel's vying with the world powers. This is the idea here. Of course, chariots and horses are singled out merely as examples of war equipment. The coming King has no need of them, since his is to be a reign of spiritual peace all through the world. The Christian Church has no military department, no standing army, no generals and war lords, not even now in its present stage, to say nothing of its final consummation. **Ephraim** is mentioned to indicate the northern kingdom, just as **Jerusalem** indicates the southern. Now the ten tribes of the northern kingdom never returned from the Assyrian exile, for they were absorbed among their Gentile captors. All the Old Testament references to the restoration of these tribes must therefore be read as involving Christ's universal Church. Read the full elaboration on Jer. 31, 31, The First Sunday in Advent. The mixed population of Samaria contained remnants of the ten tribes. We know how Christ preached in Samaria, and the apostles were ordered to do the same thing, and did it. The preaching among the Gentiles reached many of these northern Jews who had amalgamated with them. Thus in the Christian Church, where all national

differences are abolished and a spiritual kingdom established the reunion of all Israel, as far as it is possible, will be effected in a spiritual way. — Without mentioning a place or nation the Lord adds: **and the battle bow shall be cut off**, using the same verb, *karath*, “destroy,” as in the first line. In general, in all the kingdom, whether among the Jews or not, war implements shall not be needed or used. The sword and weapon of the Prince of peace is nothing but the Word.

After this negative description of the kind of kingdom the Lord will establish for this King comes the positive feature: **and he shall speak peace unto the heathen, *gojim*, nations**. This speaking of peace is the Gospel. Note well that the power and rule of this King is by means of his Word; not indeed, as Keil rightly states, by words of command, like the edicts of earthly rulers, enforced by police or military power, but by his Word, the sum and substance of which is spiritual peace. When Keil specifies that the disputes of the nations shall thus be overcome, he is off the track. For this King’s Word has nothing to do with national and political squabbles. His kingdom is not of this world at all. This King’s subjects will indeed strive for peace among men generally, but we may really call this a by-product of the Gospel’s influence in the world. The peace really meant here is a spiritual thing in men’s hearts, the peace which passeth understanding, peace with God through sins forgiven, and the bond of peace among true believers made one and made loving brethren through faith in Christ and his Gospel. Let no chiliastic notion of national world peace creep into the sermon. The consummation of the Messiah’s kingdom of peace shall be reached in heaven. See Is. 2, 4 as explained for Epiphany. — Now is added the grandness and extent of this kingdom. It shall be different from any mere national kingdom or common earthly empire: **and**

his dominion from sea to sea. National lines have nothing to do with it. Starting at one sea-shore it shall extend through nation after nation until the opposite sea-shore is reached on the other side of the world.—In the same sense is the addition: **and from the river to the ends of the earth.** The river meant is the Euphrates, viewed as the extreme eastern boundary of the Land of Israel according to Gen. 15, 18 and Ex. 23, 31. Taking this inland boundary as a kind of center, the kingdom shall extend in all directions and through all lands to the ends of the earth, comp. Acts 1, 8: “unto the uttermost part of the earth”; Matth. 28, 19: “all nations”; Mark 16, 15: “every creature.” Only divine prophecy by means of revelation and divine Inspiration could utter a thought like this, embodying the vision of a world-kingdom which no human mind ever conceived, spiritual throughout, and actually in process of realization through the centuries of Gospel promulgation. And yet there are so-called Christian theologians who dare to deny both the revelation and the Inspiration!

There is considerable difference among the commentators as regards both the translation and the meaning of v. 11. In the first place the verb *shillachthi* is not the second person: “thou wilt send forth,” nor should this prophetic perfect be rendered with a past tense: **have sent forth.** It is the first person, and, like the previous verbs, should be rendered by the future tense: “I will send forth.”—The next point deals with *gam'-athth*, **as for thee also,** or: “thou also.” Who is thus addressed? Not Ephraim alone, or Jerusalem alone, since both are mentioned together in the previous verse and again in v. 13. Both are meant, which also should be clear from the personal suffixes: “*thy* covenant,” and “*thy* prisoners.” The blood of the covenant belonged to all Israel, and all Israel’s prisoners are offered deliverance. So we conclude that **as for thee also** is placed forward for

emphasis; it is a nominative absolute, and is taken up again in the body of the sentence by **thy prisoners**. A great promise is made concerning them. Some of the exiles were not yet returned to Jerusalem; the Lord wants to lead them back also. — The Lord is actuated in this **by the blood of the covenant**. The old covenant was sealed by the blood of sacrifices repeated again and again. It typified the atonement for sin, and was thus efficacious, followed by the antitype Christ and his blood of the new covenant. We must hold fast what Zechariah has said about the coming King, and thus of the new spiritual kingdom he would erect. It would be a mistake to think only of the days immediately following the Babylonian exile. V. 11 tells us what the Lord promises to do under the reign of Christ in the whole Christian era. — He will send forth **thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water**. The entire expression is figurative, derived from Joseph's experience when his brethren cast him into a dry cistern or well-hole and left him there that he might perish. One may, of course, apply this to such Jewish exiles as were yet left afar in Assyria and Babylon. But the figure really points to a distressed spiritual condition, which is worse than any mere physical bondage among heathen nations. The promise here is not to bring all the exiled Israelites of both kingdoms back to Jerusalem. If that had been the promise we would be compelled to say that it was not fulfilled. The Lord is speaking of the days of Christ the King, and of his kingdom the Christian Church. These prisoners of Ephraim and Jerusalem are Israelites lost in sin and unbelief. They are like men confined in a pit without water, where they would have to perish miserably. But by the atoning blood of the covenant in Christ they shall be delivered from their captivity of sin and death. Christ and his apostles began this deliverance, and the blessed work has continued ever since. Every Jew converted since

the days of Christ is a fulfillment of this promise in v. 11.

12. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto you.

This is the admonition based on the promise. First the well-known verb *shub*, "to turn," used so often for repentance and conversion. **Turn you** means: forsake sin and unbelief, and come to faith in Christ. — To **turn to the strong hold** is a companion figure to the waterless pit. We see it in Ps. 40, 2: "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." This "strong hold" is the King's blessed dominion, the Jerusalem of the Christian Church, her Mount Zion. The admonition to turn is in no way synergistic, as if men could thus turn spiritually to salvation by their own natural powers. God extends the power of his grace in his Word, as he has done here. This power effectually reaches men's hearts. And so they are able to turn indeed, this power, and it alone, effecting the turning. — Wonderfully fine is the expression by which these spiritual prisoners are now addressed. They are called **ye prisoners of hope**, not hopelessly doomed, but with deliverance awaiting them. Men lost in their sins do not, of course, of themselves hope to be freed, for they love their sins and want to lie in them. The expression therefore is not "hoping, or hopeful prisoners." This "hope" is objective, the grace and promise extended to these prisoners by the Lord. A prisoner may hope indeed, and yet he may never realize his hope. But he to whom the Lord extends his grace, though personally he has never even wanted such a hope, can be freed, and will be freed, unless he persists in spurning that grace. — As a promise preceded the call to turn, so another, holding out a blessed

prospect, follows it: **even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.** "Even to-day," so far in advance, with the King not yet arrived, with things dark and discouraging for Israel, the Lord, all whose ways and acts are known to him from the beginning, declares to his people what he will surely do for them when as faithful subjects they are gathered about their great King. He will render **double, mishneh**, unto them, namely twice as much blessing in their state of grace as they had curse and wretchedness in their state of sin. This, according to the way of God, who loves a thousand times more to be gracious than to punish. Compare Is. 40, 2, The Third Sunday in Advent, where Delitzsch perverts "double," *kiphlajim* in miserable fashion to mean double measure of punishment, i. e. twice as much as the sin really deserved. Such things are possible among commentators. — And now we have *shub* again, the same verb as at the head of the verse; here *'ashib*, hiphil, **render**, or "return." When man turns, the Lord returns. When a man turns by the Lord's grace, the Lord returns to him double grace. — Here the text ends, for these verses 8-12 form a beautiful unit, telling us on Palm Sunday of the King (9), his capital (8), his Kingdom (11), his subjects (11), and their blessings (12).

SUGGESTIONS

Palm Sunday has come to have such a decided significance because of its old gospel text that there is really little question as to the way our Old Testament text should be handled. The King entering Jerusalem will ever remain the central figure. There will be few outlines built on some other center that appeal for Palm Sunday. The festive and special character of the day is augmented when Palm Sunday is made the day of confirmation for a class of catechumens. It should hardly be necessary for Lutheran pastors to urge them so to use the day. The excuse that the class cannot be made ready for

Palm Sunday is met by the simple answer: start the instruction early enough so that it need not be hurried at the last. For in the entire year there is no time for confirmation so fruitful of good for the church. Have the examination of the catechumens on Judica; let the confirmation take place Palm Sunday; add a reunion of classes confirmed on Palm Sunday evening; and then let Easter follow with the Holy Communion. This series of services is bound to be rich in spiritual fruit. The people should crowd the church again and again. Processions of the new class would be an added beautiful feature, likewise fitting floral decorations on Palm Sunday and on Easter. To speak of Zion's King at a time like this furnishes a theme that cannot be exceeded in effectiveness. — The one thing needed for the preacher who uses this Old Testament text is the thought brought out for instance by Rev. Geo. Hein in his introduction, in *Sermon Sketches on Old Testament Texts*: "Living, as we do, almost two thousand years since Christ lived in Palestine, we are in the habit of looking *back* at the Christ who has come. The prophet Zechariah, however, [lived hundreds of years before Christ came, and in our text looks *forward* to his coming; he] looks into the future, and sees Christ coming. It is the same coming; but the view-point is different. It is like viewing the same mountain peak, but from another valley. Zechariah depicts the same Palm Sunday King whom we have learned to love on the basis of the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the New Testament. But the picture is even richer and fuller, with a greater variety of careful details. Let us take a good look at **The Palm Sunday King as Portrayed Five Hundred Years in Advance.**" As an introduction the tone should be less didactic and far more festive; but the thought is decidedly to the point. — What is said of the richer picture and greater variety of detail should be fully grasped by the preacher. Our text is far more than an Old Testament version of the scene enacted on Palm Sunday when Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on an ass and greeted by a surging multitude with hosannas and palm branches. In preaching on one of the gospel accounts of Palm Sunday we must add from outside sources what Zechariah's Old Testament prophecy abundantly contains, namely, the kingdom of this King, its character and extent, the grace and call which enables us to enter, the blessed rule of the King, etc. Thus Zechariah extends our vision, from the focal point of Palm Sunday, on through the kingdom of glory at the end. It is all welcome material, nor should we allow any of the commentators to spoil it for us by their supposedly historical interpretations by which

they tie their noses down to the days following the Jewish exile. That colt of an ass in the prophecy should lead them out and up onto higher ground — if nothing else in the text will.

The focal point of the entire text is in the words: "Thy King cometh unto thee." Many preachers have used this theme in one way or another. Take Schaeffer:

The Joyous Palm Sunday Message: "Behold, Thy King Cometh Unto Thee," in the Light of Prophecy.

It opens for us a View of the Glory of

- I. His person. II. His kingdom. III. His work.*

Likewise Pressel:

Behold, Thy King Cometh Unto Thee!

- I. In the old covenant a word of hope, but meant for faith.
II. In the new covenant a word of faith, but meant for hope.*

Reu offers us the following:

Behold, Thy King Cometh Unto Thee!

- I. His being. II. His work. III. His call.*

Yet, we fear that in the proper elaboration of these outlines the preacher will find that the main parts do not all grow out of the text, but are put together as they stand mostly in order to obtain a neat, symmetrical arrangement. — Our aim should be higher. Symmetry of parts is good, and we should seek it; but penetration into the text itself is better, and we should seek this still more. Holding fast the focal point indicated let us observe that it is linked up with the call to rejoice, and this is certainly highly appropriate for the day. Literally everything in the text furnishes cause for rejoicing. Our theme, therefore, may well be:

Rejoice Greatly:

Behold, Thy King Cometh Unto Thee!

Now in the body of the text we have first of all a remarkable picture of this King of ours, one that should make our hearts rejoice. Then there is a view of the kingdom over which he shall rule, and this is bound to delight our hearts. Finally,

there is mention of his subjects, what is made of them (prisoners lifted out of the pit into a stronghold) and what is bestowed upon them (double). All this textual material is the meat of the sermon. It is only for the skill of the preacher to arrange it well. Here is a weak attempt:

- I. As he rides into his capital, *his entire appearance is lit with grace.*
- II. As the Lord bids him rule, *his whole kingdom shines with peace.*
- III. As we turn to receive him, *we and all his subjects are loaded with benefactions.*

Four cardinal terms stand out in the text: 1) King; 2) peace; 3) blood of thy covenant; 4) turn. Let us use them.

**Our Wonderful Palm Sunday Joy,
As Pictured by Zechariah, the Prophet.**

Rejoice

- I. Because of *the King* that comes to us poor sinners.
- II. Because of *the peace* he speaks to us poor sinners.
- III. Because of *the covenant blood* with which he cleanses us poor sinners.
- IV. Because of *the turning* he enables us poor sinners to make.

GOOD FRIDAY

Psalm 22, 1-19

There are really only two Old Testament texts for Good Friday, Is. 53 and our Psalm. The former is listed as the epistle text in the old line of texts, and is thus out of the question here. Both texts are nearly equal in richness. Only one thing is lacking in the Psalm, and presented so clearly in Isaiah, namely the vicarious "for you." Yet the Psalm opens with the very words which Christ at the climax of his suffering cried on the cross, and the description of his suffering as his body hung stretched out upon the cross is tremendously effective. No need to say that this text describes in dramatic fashion Christ's Agony on the Cross.

Spurgeon makes things rather easy for himself when he writes: "David and his afflictions may be here in a very modified sense, but as the star is concealed by the light of the sun, he who sees Jesus will probably neither see nor care to see David." This is simply to pass up a problem which after all remains and calls for solution. We must agree with Delitzsch that the solution is not furnished by the idea of type and antitype. The type is always less than the antitype, a kind of miniature; and when the antitype appears it towers far above the type. But this is not the case in our Psalm. When we read of David's own experience, for instance 1 Sam. 23, 25-26, this Psalm frankly transcends anything that David could truthfully say regarding his own person, both as pertains to the severity of his own suffering, and as to the glorious outcome of that suffering. Delitzsch speaks of the hyperbolic element woven into poetic

effusions among orientals, and how in this case the hyperbole was governed and directed by the Holy Spirit, and thus became truly prophetic. But is this really a satisfactory solution? David could not in any truthful sense exaggerate in describing his own personal sufferings and their results, so that the exaggeration actually describes, as it does, Christ's suffering and the outcome of it. Any hyperbole extended to such altitudes would cease to be hyperbole. It would be outright prophecy, and nothing less.— And that is the real solution, at least as far as human minds can attain a solution. The fact is that Christ here speaks through David. The old statement of Cassiodor has it correctly: *ut non tam prophetica, quam historia videatur.* Bakius says that the Psalm is wholly to be explained as speaking of Christ. Even the old Jews, when acknowledging a suffering Messiah, had a Midrash which read the laments in Psalm 22 as the laments of the Messiah. But while this fact is forced upon us as *a fact*, the question remains as to *how* David could thus ascend from any suffering of his own under the persecutions of Saul to such a graphic picture of the sufferings of the coming Redeemer. Delitzsch has David prophetically identify himself with Christ. To us this seems like saying entirely too much. It makes David make entirely too much of himself. No, there is no identification here — David's person is left too far behind the Christ who actually, though prophetically, speaks here. This means, in plain words, that Ps. 22 is no attempt of David to describe his own pains and their fruit. As Isaiah in chapter 53 simply prophesied, so David does here. Isaiah wrote poetry too, only he wrote description; David's poem is drama. Isaiah's verses picture the Redeemer in his suffering and his glorification; David's verses let us hear the Redeemer himself speaking in his agony and in his triumph. There are similar dramatizations in the writings of the prophets.

Here the entire poem is of that character. And that, let us frankly confess, is about as far as we dare to go; what lies beyond is behind the veil of the Spirit of revelation and Inspiration.

1. **My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
why art thou so far from helping me, and
from the words of my roaring?**
2. **O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou
hearest not;
and in the night season, and am not silent.**

The very first line strikes the fullest tragic chord. All the laments that follow are pendant from this supreme cry of agony. That Jesus took these words from our Psalm when he cried them out at the end of the three hours of darkness on the cross, the evangelists do not say. Only the parting of the garments by lots, and the cry "I thirst," are directly said to be in fulfillment of Scripture. Nevertheless, even the scoffer David Strauss says that our Psalm furnishes "complete in advance" the program of Christ's crucifixion. Line after line tallies exactly with what took place on Calvary. This first line Matthew even records in the original. Jesus spoke it in Aramaic, the current Jewish idiom of his day, and thus said *sabachthani*, while David wrote *'azabthani*, a mere formal change. The omniscient Spirit of prophecy only could have placed at the head of this Psalm that supreme cry of agony on the cross. For, it is not because David wrote this line that Christ on the cross made it his cry, but because Christ would thus cry out on the cross David wrote it down as a prophet. — The old ideas, that Christ spoke aloud the entire Psalm, perhaps also other Psalms, or that he spoke aloud the first line only and silently went through the rest, is without foundation, and destroys the force of Christ's

actual cry. The idea that either the physical agonies, or the inner mental distress, pressed out this cry is certainly insufficient, since men have often suffered both, and yet have felt deep inner comfort in the fact that God was with them. Nor can the forsaking of which Christ complains be reduced to mean only an abandonment to the wicked power of his enemies; for this would mean that Christ had so low an idea of God and fellowship with him, that he felt his nearness only in fortunate days, and lost that feeling when his enemies seemed to triumph over him. Again it is wrong to think that this cry of Christ came only from his human nature, as if in these three hours of his agony his human nature had been unclothed of the divine and left to stand alone. Such Nestorianism only falsifies the agony on the cross. Jesus does not lament that his divine nature or its divine powers have forsaken him, but that another person ("thou") has forsaken him. Some have supposed that when Christ uttered this cry he virtually tasted of death, and that this is what he meant by being forsaken of God. But Christ died, actually died later, and in his actual death was not forsaken of God, for he commended his soul into his Father's hands. And no virtual dying can exceed the actual dying. Again, it is true enough that the death of the sinless Son of man must have been far more bitter than the death of any sinful man can possibly be. But again we must reply, this does not explain the forsaking; for if God does not forsake us sinners in the hour of death, how could he forsake his sinless Son when death came for him?

Christ's cry means more than any of these explanations offer. First, note the difference between Gethsemane and Golgotha. In the garden Christ had a God who heard and strengthened him, on the cross this God had turned wholly away from him. During those three black hours Christ was made sin for us,

was made a curse in our stead, and the wrath of God
was poured out upon him. In the garden Christ
wrestled with himself and brought himself to do the
Father's will; on the cross he wrestles with God.
With his dying powers he cries to God, and he now
sees in him no longer the Father, for a wall of sep-
aration has risen between the Father and the Son.
No friendly countenance looks down upon Christ, no
word of comfort comes from above. His soul thirsts
for God, but God has removed himself. It is not
the Son that has left the Father, but the Father who
has left the Son. The Son cries for God, and God
makes no reply to him. This doubling: **My God, my**
God! is full of intensity. The two possessives **my**
show how even now his soul reaches out to God in
love and trust. Yet, the fact stands, **God has turned**
away. — **Christ asks: Why?** The word has often
been treated superficially as when one cries why in
mere complaint and expects no answer. But Christ
asks a reason or cause. **That involves, to begin with,**
the sinlessness of Christ; for if only in one instance
he had sinned, he could not have asked "why." Again,
it promises obedience; if God will only tell him the
reason, he means to bear also this climax of agony.
Finally, **this why reveals that in his state of humili-**
ation, among the things Christ did not know (Matth.
24, 36), must be reckoned the mystery of his finally
being forsaken by God. Not to know this why at
the very time when God turned from him was, we
may venture to say, the worst agony of all for Christ's
soul. Yet Christ bore it, and was thus made perfect
in suffering, as Hebrews puts it. It is one thing for
us to think here of the wrath of God for our sin, it is
quite another for Christ to experience that wrath in
being forsaken of God in the hour of his deepest humili-
ation, and ^{more} to understand this utmost measure of its
infliction. [^]

The second line elucidates this being forsaken of God. We may translate: "Far from my help are the words of my roaring." The help and the cry for help are widely separated, because the Helper has forsaken this sufferer. *Sh'agah* is used of the roaring of a lion; here it is not inarticulate because of the added *debde*: "words of my roaring." The predicate *rachog*, put forward, is singular, but may be followed by a plural noun as in this case, *d'barim*. Here is a graphic picture of being forsaken: a sufferer crying in his extremity, and his Helper far away and not heeding or answering.

V. 2 tells of the extent of this crying. Where before we had *'Eli*, the God of might, we now hear the address *'Elohaj*, the God to be revered. The last clause is really not correctly rendered by: **and am silent**; or by the margin: "there is no silence to me"; but should read: "without there being rest for me," by receiving answer and help. It is true, as Delitzsch says, that as the catastrophe approached, namely the three hours of being forsaken of God on the cross, the prayer conflict of Christ became more and more intense, and finally broke through in the cry *'Eli*, *'Eli*, etc. But that inexplicable forsaking he had faced days and nights before, with his soul crying in vain as the Psalmist had prophesied. Yet it is also true what Hebrews 5, 7 records: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death" (here to lift him again out of the death, Riggenbach), "and was heard in that he feared." As regards the death we know that Christ died peacefully, commending his soul into his Father's hands, and he who had hung forsaken, crying in vain, was raised in triumph on Easter morn.

3. **But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.**
4. **Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.**
5. **They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.**

The *v*^o is adversative. That God should not hear or delay hearing seems out of accord with the experiences of Israel. How often had he heard the fathers, from whom also Christ descended according to the flesh; and should he not hear Christ now? **Thou art holy**, *qadosh*, means separated from all impurity, weakness, and sin; it means perfect in every respect, including also his truthfulness and his unchanging faithfulness in his covenant relation to Israel.—Because Israel found him such it gave him **praises**, magnified and lauded his name in the Temple worship. The figure **inhabitest the praises** is like the expression in Ps. 99, 1: “He sitteth between the cherubims.” These praises, telling of his attributes and works, are like the wings of the cherubim on which the **presence of God** rested. God seems now to have changed. Once he had attested himself as the holy One by aiding those who revered him against their persecutors; now he turns from his own Son. In v. 4 trusting results in delivering; in v. 5 trust and deliverance are reciprocal. The verb *philleth* means “to escape”; the verb *millet* “to slip away,” or go unscathed. The addition: **and were not confounded**, shamed or disgraced, brings out the vital inner point of the trust. Men would have laughed at them, and the fathers themselves would have felt themselves fools, if their trusting had not been paired with deliverance.

6. **But I *am* a worm, and no man;
a reproach of men, and despised of the
people.**
7. **All they that see me laugh me to scorn:
they shoot out the lip, they shake the head,
*saying,***
8. **He trusted on the LORD *that* he would
deliver him:
let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in
him.**

Here is a prophetic description of Christ's suffering on the cross, every word of which might have been composed after the event; yet it was written down by King David. Christ's bloody appearance like a crushed worm, and then the mockery literally as it actually took place, even down to the ridicule of his trusting in the Lord, and of thus referring him to the Lord. It is the hand of revelation and of Inspiration plain beyond a doubt. — *V^e* is adversative. What a contrast between Christ dying helplessly on the cross, and the fathers singing praises for having been delivered. All this is packed into the striking metaphor: **I a worm**, *thola'ath*, used in particular for the *vermiculus cocci*, from the eggs of which vermilion color was secured (Koenig). Here the point of comparison, however, is not the color, but the utter defenselessness and helplessness of the worm. Think how easy it is to step on a worm, how the crushed worm can only writhe and die. So Christ wholly abandoned to his foes was indeed crushed bloody and died in his agony. — The negative addition: **and no man**, heightens the figure, in the sense that the bloody body of Christ hardly looked like a man any more. Is. 52, 14. Most of the pictures of the crucified Savior are too beautiful, idealized by the painters. But a look at Tissot's Christ on the cross, haggard and drawn to the extreme, and

all streaked with trickles and streamlets of blood, marked with contusions and bruises from blows, brings home to us this prophetic line: "a worm, and no man." — Koenig translates *cherphah*, a reproach, by *Schmaehobject*, an object of abuse. **Of men** is a subjective genitive: men abuse this sufferer. The expression is the literal equivalent for the figurative term "worm." The duplication of the idea: **and despised of the people**, 'am, the *plebs*, rabble, not *populus*, intensifies the thought. *B^zuj* is from *bazah*, "to despise." — V. 7 describes the actual abuse and derision: **All they that see me laugh me to scorn.** The verb *la'ab* means "to ridicule." The LXX translated it ἐξεμυκτήρισάν με, and Delitzsch remarks that here prophecy and fulfillment correspond so exactly, that when the Passion History was written Luke in 23, 35 could find no more adequate Greek term for the mocking actions of the Jews than ἐμυκτηρίζω, "to draw up the nose." — Still further details are given: **they shoot out** (margin: "open") **the lip.** The hiphil of *phatar* used with *b^ssaphah*, means to make an opening with the lip, *den Mund weit aufreissen*, an expression of speechless astonishment (Koenig), all pretended by the Jews under the cross, to ridicule and mock the Savior. — With the gaping mouth goes the wagging head, *Ausdruck des Hohnes* (Koenig), see *nu'a*, hiphil. "They that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads." Matth. 27, 39. This wagging of the head is to express that the men doing it consider the person involved utterly foolish, silly, and incomprehensible in his words and actions.

V. 8 completes the description of derision and mockery by adding, without *le'mor*, the actual words of mockery. Here again the prophecy is literal when compared with the fulfillment. Matthew writes 27, 43: "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him." David wrote: "He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him,

seeing he delighted in him." And yet so many deny revelation, and there are theologians who can find no verbal Inspiration in the Scriptures! Only *gol* is the imperative from *galal*, *anheimstellen*. So these mockers say to Christ: "Commit it to the Lord — he will free him (or: bring him to safety)." Our translation reads *gol* as the third pers. sing. of the piel: "he trusted," relied on, which would be a mocking admission, and yet, without these mockers realizing it, from their own lips an admission of the actual fact in Jesus' heart. Their idea is that Jesus dying helplessly on the cross is proof positive that Jehovah has disowned him. They are sure that no matter how Jesus may cry to the Lord, he will never be heard. — The second line should read in conformity with the immediately preceding clause: "he will rescue him," *yatstsilehu*, *hiphil* from *natsal*. It thus merely repeats and dwells on the thought: "he will free him," or: bring him to safety. But in so doing these mockers, without realizing it, state exactly what the Lord would finally do with Jesus, and did do with him: "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation?" Is. 53, 8. — It is the same with the added *ki* clause: **seeing he delighted in him**, in which the conjunction may mean: "in case." For these scoffers it is certain that the Lord does not delight in Jesus. The *ki* may also be the sarcastic "for," or "because," ironically throwing at Jesus his own conviction that the Lord is pleased with him. *Chaphetz* with *b^c* is used of God's delight in man. Of course, we are here reminded of the Father's own words: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matth. 3, 17; 12, 18. — In the midst of his forsaken condition and extreme agony under the divine wrath, the great Sufferer holds all this terrible experience up to God, as if he meant to say: God, canst thou tolerate it?

9. **But thou art he that took me out of the womb:**
 thou didst make me hope when I was upon
 my mother's breasts.
10. **I was cast upon thee from the womb:**
 thou art my God from my mother's belly.
11. **Be not far from me; for trouble is near;**
 for there is none to help.

The *ki* with which this stanza begins is elliptical, and should not be translated with **but**; it is "for," and implies the thought: "You scoffers are right, for" etc. The Sufferer who is told sarcastically to trust in the Lord is here proceeding to do that very thing. In fact he recalls how from his birth on there never was any hope or help for him save in the Lord. The verb *goach* is listed as transitive by Koenig, "to drive out from within," and the form *gochi* in our passage he lists as the participle: **Thou art he that took me out of the womb**, *beten*. — So also in infancy the Lord was his one support. The hiphil of *batach* means to fill with confidence, and thus to make one live in security. This is how we must understand: **thou didst make me hope upon my mother's breasts**, when I was a nursling. — After thus significantly stating what the Lord had done, showing in this way how worthy of trust he is, the sufferer's dependence on him from his infancy on is added as a kind of counterpart. First, the Lord's trustworthiness, stated in terms of experience, v. 9; secondly, the Sufferer's dependence, likewise in terms of experience, v. 10; and we may at once add here, thirdly, the experimental deduction for the Sufferer, trust and prayer in his present need, v. 11. **I was cast upon thee from the womb**, the hophal from *shalak*, literally "to be thrown," means to say that from his very first breath on the Sufferer had only the Lord to depend on for his life and well-

being. How true this was of Jesus a thought of Herod's attempts to murder the young child makes very plain. — The same thought is in the parallel line: **thou my God from my mother's belly**, only now the subject is God, and the dependence is expressed by the predicate "my God." The double statement of the same thought in the two lines is for emphasis. — The two verses 9 and 10 have repeated references to the Savior's mother, and the word **mother** occurs twice. Delitzsch makes the fine observation that while thus the mother of Christ is freely mentioned in the Old Testament, there is never a trace of mention regarding any human father of Christ. Surely, this is not accidental. It is one of the striking covert proofs of his double nature: "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary." There also seems to be a plain hint here of Christ's lowly outward circumstances from his birth on. — The foundation is laid: God is trustworthy and proven as such, and he who speaks here has had to depend wholly on him. On these two pillars he erects the arch of his prayer now: **Be not far from me**, or: "hold not thyself far from me," which recalls the term "forsaken" in v. 1. God's nearness is help, his being far away is being left helpless. It is not a question of the divine omnipresence, but of the divine grace. The cry is one of faith and trust, the greater in Christ because during those terrible hours God had forsaken him. — And there is now supreme reason for that cry: **for trouble is near**, *tsarah*, the Ger. *Drangsal*, oppression. And "trouble" beyond all human ability to relieve: **for none to help** (see '*azar*'). This "trouble" is now dramatically described, and again we are made to feel as if we actually stood beneath the cross.

12. **Many bulls have compassed me:**
strong bulls of Bashan have beset me
round.
13. **They gaped upon me with their mouths,**
as a ravening and a roaring lion.

Here is a real picture of Christ alone in the midst of his bloodthirsty enemies. Since his capture they raged around him and bellowed even around his cross. Spurgeon writes: "The mighty ones in the crowd are here marked by the tearful eye of their victim. The priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, rulers, and captains bellowed round the cross like wild cattle, fed in the fat and solitary pastures of Bashan, full of strength and fury; they stamped and foamed around the innocent One, and longed to gore him to death with their cruelties. Conceive of the Lord Jesus as a helpless, unarmed, naked man, cast into the midst of a herd of infuriated wild bulls. They were brutal as bulls, many, and strong, and the Rejected One was all alone, and bound naked to the tree." But Spurgeon should have added that the Lord Jesus was abandoned unto these bulls, God withdrew his hand, and during those three hours even let his wrath rest upon his own Son. The word *'abbir* = very strong, and is itself used of a horse, bull, and tryant. Fertile Bashan was noted for its wild cattle. Delitzsch adds the remark that since Satan caused the fall through a beast, the beast and Satan are the two ruling potencies in the adamic humanity. These metaphors naming beasts are thus really more than metaphors; there is an actual bestial element in sinful man, and when it fully displays itself, as it did in the Passion, this bull, lion, and dog nature actually appears as such. The human recedes, the beastly dominates. — *Sasab* = surround; and the following synonym *kithther* = encircle, and hedge in, intensifies the idea. Jesus was hopelessly beset.— There should be no difficulty in understanding the

clause: **They gaped upon me with their mouths**, not of the bulls in v. 14, but literally of the human enemies of Christ, for even in the figure of the bulls the actual persons are in mind, and dramatic poetry like this takes such antecedents for granted. But the way these foes opened their mouths to shout deadly things at Jesus suggests a second metaphor: **a ravening and a roaring lion** (omit the inserted "as," since this is not simile). This singular, namely "lion," and not "lions," is not accidental. Bulls, as well as dogs (v. 16), run and fight in groups, the lion operates alone. The Hebrew reads: "a lion, ravening and roaring," which is stronger. **Ravening** = jaws distended to tear and devour his prey; and **roaring** is another true touch from nature, since the lion when about to pounce upon his victim emits his frightful roar. Christ's enemies were like a lion about to spring upon his utterly helpless victim, with no one to interfere. And he did spring and did rend him.—The description of this condition of terror is extended:

14. **I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint:
my heart is like wax;
it is melted in the midst of my bowels.**
15. **My strength is dried up like a potsherd;
and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;
and thou hast brought me into the dust of
death.**
16. **For dogs have compassed me:
the assembly of the wicked have inclosed
me:
they pierced my hands and my feet.**
17. **I may tell all my bones:
they look *and* stare upon me.**
18. **They part my garments among them, and
cast lots upon my vesture.**

In these two stanzas (14-15; 16-18), or we may say in this double stanza, as Delitzsch has put it, Christ is described "still not dead, yet as if dead." The point of comparison in **poured out like water** is dissolution. As water flows apart when poured out, and all cohesion is gone, so Christ's life and life-powers dissolved away. The ideas of defenseless exposure and subjection to any and every attack are foreign to the figure. Rather we speak of life "ebbing away," which resembles the figure of water "poured out." — **All my bones are out of joint** graphically pictures the distention in crucifixion. When Spurgeon imagines that there may have been some actual dislocations, he overlooks the word "all." Moreover, *pharad* means to distend, so that there are no folds, and Koenig gives to the *hithpael* in our verse the meaning "fall apart." There was a violent and excruciatingly painful distention of all the major joints of Christ's body on the cross. Since David writes no essay on anatomy, but a Psalm for us all to read, "all" is justified, and "drawn apart" is quite correct for the verb used. The margin has "sundered." — From the feeling in the body and in the limbs, the advance is made to the **heart**, which is compared to **wax**, and the point of the comparison stated: **it is melted in the midst of my bowels**. The whole verse is a wonderfully graphic picture of the process of dissolution in crucifixion. Nevertheless its climax, the heart melting like wax, should not be reduced to the burning physical agony of the heart, the bursting blood-pressure in heart and head, which, according to Delitzsch, really produces death in crucifixion. We must get away from all this generalization, which classifies Christ's crucifixion with that of other men, and then lists the agonies endured by Christ according to what is usual in all such cases. There is only a limited field for this, for even when the physical tortures seem alike, there is always in Christ's case the

burden of the world's guilt behind even those tortures, to say nothing of his agonies which very fittingly are called in the old Greek liturgy "thine unknown suffering." This applies to the heart melting like wax. The **heart** is the center of life, and we may recall that the **bowels**, *me'ay*, were of old the seat of the emotions. So Christ's life and vital energy were dissolved by the burning wrath under the curse of sin. For Christ did not merely die, like other men crucified, he died as the atoning sacrifice for all other men's sins.

All this is amplified in V. 15. Instead of "heart" we now have **my strength**, the vital forces or life-strength. The idea in **is dried up like a potsherd** does not mean that a broken piece of an earthen vessel also dries up. A potsherd is only a piece of such a vessel broken out long after the vessel has been put through the kiln. The words mean, that after the life forces are dried up and gone, what is left is nothing but a useless potsherd. — The addition: **and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws**, is to serve as an illustration of the strength drying up. *Malqochay* is the *acc. loci*, the accusative of place, here: "to my throat," *fauces meas*. What was it that caused the overpowering thirst Christ suffered? Was it the loss of blood, the feverish condition and inflammation caused by the physical crucifixion, and the fact that he had no drink since the early part of the night before? Surely all these physical points are involved; but above all it was the consuming and burning agony of the invisible load that he bore, that was drying up his heart (life) and strength, caused his tongue to cleave to his palate, and forced out the cry, "I thirst," John. 19, 28. In interpreting "I thirst" in the *New Gospel Selections*, the physical cause of this thirst is stressed, yet only against the symbolical views found so often in writings that seek to be especially devotional and spiritual as well as in some

commentaries. The fuller interpretation is given here, the other should be amplified accordingly. Put behind Christ's parched tongue and his terrible thirst also the burning which his soul endured as our sacrifice. — There is no reason to call for any transpositions, for instance that the line now following: **and thou hast brought me into the dust of death**, belongs at the end of v. 16, unless we mean to do some composing on this Psalm ourselves. V. 14 and 15 properly end with the idea of death. But there is nothing in the text about the "clamminess of the mouth" (Stevenson, Spurgeon), as the immediate forerunner of dissolution. For the heart to melt and the strength to dry up is enough; the next step would be death. Far more fruitful is it to observe that Christ's death is not merely in the course of events, *blösses Widerfahrnis*, but an infliction direct from God, *Verhaengnis*; not under the mere permission of God as in providence, but the will of God according to a special saving purpose. God made Christ to die as he died because of our sins. Hence here the great Sufferer does not say: "I am dying"; but, "thou hast brought me" etc. And the verb *shaphat*, "to set," here *hinlagern*, to lay one down has the connotation of permanence, and the imperfect points to the action as now taking place. So Christ was now being laid into death, and **the dust** already speaks of the tomb and burial.

In v. 14-15 the Dying One describes his own sensations; in 16-18 he adds the signal outward features connected with his dying. There is no difficulty at all, if one only lets the Psalmist paint the picture, instead of trying to rearrange his lines and repaint the picture ourselves. Christ dies encircled by his enemies: **For dogs have compassed me, etc.** The next line uses in place of the figure "dogs" the literal designation: **the assembly of the wicked.** Yet in the figure "dogs," especially when one thinks

of the dogs of the orient, there is something base and despicable. In v. 12 bulls connoted strength and fury; here dogs connote ignoble ferocity. But not as Spurgeon imagines, when a noble stag is hunted with a pack of hounds. These dogs in the Psalm are a mongrel lot, running together of their own accord, and doing their own hunting. They are the very opposite of the dogs that came and licked Lazarus' sores. In the caption of our Psalm *Aijeleth Shahar* the margin and even the majority of translators render: "the Hind of the Morning," meaning Christ. This Hind the dogs now encircle. — In the English **the assembly of the wicked** makes one think of a called and orderly meeting, but according to the context, as Koenig explains, '*edah* means crowd, rabble; for instance the rebellious company of Korah, Num. 16, 5. And *ra'*, **wicked**, means morally base. So we conclude that v. 12 with its bulls refers to the Jewish leaders at the death of Christ, who are also mentioned as present beneath his cross; and our verse with its "dogs" refers to the whole hostile crowd, leaders and many others, around the cross. And the verb *naqaph* (hiphil, and in the plural *ad sensum*) intensified the idea of encircling in *sabab* of the first line. The English is good: **have compassed me . . . have inclosed me**. So the Redeemer dies, surrounded and watched by the cruel eyes of his enemies. — Much research and learning has been spent on the third line in v. 16: **they pierced my hands and my feet**. The trouble is with *ka'ari*. '*Ari* is "lion," and *ka* the prefix *k^e*, "like a lion." Even Delitzsch (4th ed.) translates: "A rabble of the wicked have encircled, like a lion, my hands and feet," although he himself admits the mention of "hands and feet" to be *schleppend und hart*. It is worse, it makes no good sense. Many ancient texts and authorities have *ka'aru* instead of *ka'ari*, translated in different ways, but by the LXX ὠρῶσαν, "have pierced,"

against which nothing can be urged. The long story is most satisfactorily ended by Koenig: *ka'ari* is intended as the construct plural participle from *kur*: they were "piercing" (digging through) my hands and my feet. By this finding even the charge falls that the Jews purposely corrupted the word by changing a letter, so as to prevent the Christians from pointing to this Psalm passage in corroboration of the death of the Messiah by crucifixion. Such prophetic corroboration this passage indeed is. Nothing like the piercing of hands and feet, by any possible stretch of figurative language, ever happened to David. In Christ, and in him alone, this remarkable line was literally fulfilled. See Is. 49, 16 and Rev. 1, 7.

In perfect harmony with crucifixion are the two lines of v. 17. The body naked and stretched in its members on the cross makes the bones prominent so that all the larger ones could be counted. The verb *asapher* is the potential: **I may tell** (*saphar*, "count") **all my bones.** — So also: **they look and stare upon me**, means: as I hang naked on the cross. To look, *nabat*, is to direct the eyes; and to stare, *ra'ah* with *b^e*, to feast the eyes on. That dying form, distended on the cross, was a pleasure to these foes.

Again in the highest degree striking in the exact literalness of its prophecy is v. 18. **First: They part my garments among them**, *b^egadim*, ἑμάτια, the long loose outer mantel, the girdle, the turban, and the sandals. Nebe does a strange thing, he says the sandals were worthless, there was no turban, and the girdle belonged to the robe. He gets four parts for a division by having the robe torn into four pieces. But this is Nebe's imagination gone astray, ending up with four useless large rags! There is nothing to compel us to assume that the four parts were equal in value; the soldiers made four as best they could. — Then the supreme prophetic detail: **and cast lots upon my vesture**, *l^ebush*, χιτῶν. This is the costly

tunic, which as its Hebrew designation indicates was worn next to the body, a loose outer mantel or robe being worn over it. Christ's "coat," John 19, 23-24, was seamless, woven in one piece, and this evangelist records that on this very account the soldiers attempted no division, but raffled this "vesture" off. John as well as the synoptists explicitly refer to our Psalm passage as having foretold both the parting and the casting of lots. But the thing for us to note is that this is the climax of the description showing the outer events accompanying the actual death of Christ. All Christ's earthly belongings consisted of the clothes he wore, and these were divided out to his executioners as their perquisite. In other words, Christ is treated as one already dead; in fact, he did so die. —

**19. But be not thou far from me, O LORD:
O my strength, haste thee to help me.**

By the simple means of putting all this description of the Savior's suffering into his own mouth, and having him address God: "I . . . thou," the tone of prayer and of heartrending appeal rings through it all. But this is now put into actual words, v. 19-21. For our text, which on this day intends to have us dwell most of all on the main features of the Passion itself and of its spiritual significance, it is enough to have the first note of actual prayer. — What trembled on the great Sufferer's lips in v. 11, is now voiced fully: **Be not thou far from me, O LORD.** The idea is that the mere nearness already will assure the Sufferer's deliverance. And he uses two significant names: *Yaveh*, the Lord of the covenant, unchanging in his covenant relation; and *'Eyaluthi*, an abstract neuter from *'eyal*, thus: **my strength**, in the sense of: thou in whom the whole conception of strength is realized. Thus unchanging love and absolute omnipotence is combined. *Chush* = haste, *beschleunigen*,

with the idea of speed, as in the case of a runner. — We will ask: Was this prayer heard and answered? The second half of the Psalm has the reply. Not that Christ did not suffer all that he here prophetically uttered, and not that he did not die by the will of God; the hearing was in the glorification which followed.

SUGGESTIONS

Avoid two types of sermons for Good Friday on this text, those built according to the following formulas: 1) as David at one time — so Christ afterward; 2) as Christ — so now we. The former necessitates an erasing of the most distinctive things in the text, and the whole sermon will be as cheap as David instead of as rich as Christ. The latter is using homiletical application where the supreme thing should be homiletical appropriation; it preaches morals where it should preach redemption. Kessler has one: What may the Christian learn beneath his Savior's cross? 1) To suffer without murmuring. 2) To pray without fainting. 3) To die without despairing. Cheap little "lessons" these from one of the stupendous texts in the Bible.

The text moves like mighty ocean billows — high curling crests, and vast deeps between. Here is a mountain range, with a number of snowy peaks towering beyond the clouds. Poetry seldom submits to cold and measured analysis, although it follows an exalted artistic life-like line of its own. Since the first part of this Psalm is itself a wonderful synthesis, the preacher can do no better homiletically than himself to use synthesis for his sermon. This means a listing of the chief features in the text in due order as presented, and then a rebuilding of them in an order chosen by the preacher for his sermon. The chief features are:

- 1) "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," v. 1.
- 2) "I am a worm . . . a reproach . . . despised," v. 6.
- 3) "Scorn" and mockery, v. 7.
- 4) "He trusted on the Lord," v. 8.
- 5) "Many bulls," v. 12.
- 6) "I am poured out like water," etc., inner dissolution, v. 14.

- 7) "My tongue cleaveth," v. 15, thirst.
- 8) "The dust of death," v. 15.
- 9) "They pierced my hands and my feet," v. 16, crucifixion.
- 10) Body exposed for foes to gloat on, v. 17.
- 11) Garments divided, and lots cast, v. 18.
- 12) Prayer, v. 11 and 19.

It is always good in longer texts containing a number of elements to make a list like this and to keep it before the eyes while meditating and absorbing, until, often as in a flash, the whole thing crystallizes, or a central dominating thought rises to view. When this seems slow in coming reflect on possible auxiliary concepts or thoughts, which are like different viewpoints or stations from which to view the text and its material. Such an auxiliary thought here is the fact that Christ himself is here speaking, we hear *his own voice from the cross*, prophetic, yet speaking in actual experience. Another auxiliary thought is the idea running through the text that all this suffering is *a divine infliction*. And this is intensified by the fact that by not a single word does the Sufferer speak of any guilt of his own, he is wholly *sinless and innocent*. And that leaves in a very marked way back of the whole tragic monologue the question: *Why was this necessary?* Again, we may note as an auxiliary idea, that in our Psalm we have Christ's suffering on the cross described from *his own viewpoint*. Still other useful and pertinent ideas may suggest themselves to the preacher; it pays to look for them. Yet in preaching on this text, let us observe what Sueskind says: "No man can completely expound these words, think them through, give them voice, because no man has ever experienced such distress of soul; no man has ever loaded on himself the sins of all men." And another says: "Lord, we thank thee, that we do not understand what thy soul endured in this hour; for we know that such understanding would mean for us dying for ever and ever." — Here is a simple effort, using the first auxiliary concept mentioned above, and connecting the sufferings of the Innocent One with our sins:

Christ Himself Tells Us,

What Our Sins did for Him on the Cross.

- I. *I was forsaken of God.* Because in every one of thy sins thou didst forsake God, I tasted the bitter cup of God's wrath.

- II. *My hands and feet were pierced.* Because in all thy life thy hands and feet sin endlessly, I died the most horrible death of crucifixion.
- III. *I was despised and scorned.* Because thou lovest the praise of men and the favor of the crowd, bulls and dogs raged around me to bring me to death. And because thou didst not trust God my trust in him was mocked as if in vain.
- IV. *My flesh endured the most cruel shame and torture.* Because of your pride of body I was exposed naked with cruel eyes to gloat on, and my limbs were stretched with excruciating pain. Because of your sinful appetites my tongue clave to my jaws. Because of your sinful delights in living I endured all the pangs of dissolution in dying.
- V. *Yet all this I suffered with prayer to my God.* I submitted — God knew why this was necessary for thee. — I was patient and murmured not — although I was sinless, and the burden of thy sin exceeds comprehension. — I trusted on through death itself — God would lift me from death and the grave.

This is holy ground; bow thy soul into the dust! These are the most sacred hours the world has ever passed through; let thy soul look up to God who redeemed thee!

**David Takes Us Beneath the Cross
and Shows Us in the Sufferings of Christ
the Price of Our Redemption.**

- I. *What men did to Christ.*
 II. *What God himself did to Christ.*
 III. *What Christ felt in his own soul.*
 IV. *And thus what our redemption cost.*

**The Great Questions Raised by David's
Picture of Christ on the Cross.**

- I. *How could men be so cruel?* A revelation of the abysmal depths of our sinful condition. These bulls of Bashan represent our wicked race.
- II. *How could God be so severe?* A revelation of the holy wrath of God for sin when Christ took it all upon himself. "God spared not his own Son."
- III. *How could the Innocent Savior endure such agonies?* A revelation of the infinite love which paid the penalty of the guilty.

One of the things to avoid in the sermon is the mere pathetic cataloging of the sufferings recorded. While the details and the enormity of the agonies must be presented, these alone are not enough. Add the deeper things that lie under the surface, as they are pointed to by the text itself which throughout suggests the vital question: **Why?**

THE EASTER CYCLE

EASTER

Ps. 118, 14-24

The Easter cycle, beginning as it does with the main festival day itself, opens with a burst of glory. The remainder of the cycle, extending to Cantate, is like a gradual decrescendo from that high note. Of course, the subject for the festival is Christ risen from the dead. This, however, is not presented in the Psalm in a prophetic way, as is the crucifixion of Christ in Ps. 22, the text for Good Friday. Instead of just prophecy, more or less clear, this Psalm offers a hymn of praise, and in the portion of it which forms our text there are prophetic utterances which, whatever other occasions they may also fit, accord in a remarkable way with what happened on Easter Day. So we may say, this text voices *Israel's and Our Easter Joy at the Resurrection Miracle*. For the Day after Easter the Eisenach series has Ps. 16, 8-10 on the resurrection hope, a text not treated in this volume. — Quasimodogeniti is always treated as the octave of Easter. It is a kind of second Easter, the significance of the festival being so great as to reach out to a second Sunday to give it full expression. The text, Gen. 32, 22-31, uses Jacob's wrestling as a type of Christ's conflict and victory. We may say that its subject is *A Patriarchal Prefigurement of Christ's Great Victory*. — Misericordias Domini is the Sunday of the Good Shepherd, as the old gospel text so plainly shows. Ps. 23 is therefore a very happy choice, especially because of its Easter notes: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil . . . and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Let us make the subject:

Our Good Shepherd's Easter Blessings. — For Jubilate the text is Is. 40, 26-31, on the Lord's might, and how he bestows strength on those that wait for him. Viewed in the Easter light we may say this text shows *The Might of Our Risen Lord a Comfort in Our Weakness.* — Finally, Cantate offers Ps. 98, the Psalm from which the versicle for this Sunday is taken: "O sing unto the Lord a new song," etc. So this text is *A Call to Praise the Risen Lord's Salvation, Righteousness, and Judgment.* In general, all that these texts speak and sing of could not be for us to-day, and could not have been for the Old Testament saints in their day when these texts were first penned, without the Easter miracle.

Luther says on our Psalm: "This is my Psalm, which I love, my beloved *Confitemini*. Although the entire Psalter and the Holy Scriptures are also very dear to me, as that which is my sole comfort in life, yet I have happened especially upon this Psalm, so that it must be called and must be *mine*; for also it has often genuinely merited much for me and helped me out of many a great need, where otherwise neither emperor, kings, sages, learned, saints could have helped me." Read Matth. 21, 42, where a few days before his death the Lord himself applies to himself what the Psalm says on the stone rejected of the builders and become the head of the corner. It seems that when Ezra laid the foundations of the second Temple after the Babylonian exile our Psalm was used in a special divine service, its first and last lines even quoted in Ez. 3, 10-11. Its liturgical character is marked, so that it was natural to use this Psalm more frequently on great occasions of worship than other Psalms. Delitzsch is sure that the Psalm is post-exilic. The efforts to determine from its own statement the date and occasion of its composition have furnished three suppositions: 1) the first Feast of Tabernacles after the exile, when only a plain altar stood in the holy

place, Ez. 3, 1-4, Ewald; 2) the laying of the corner-stone of the second Temple, Ez. 3, 8 etc., Hengstenberg; 3) the dedication of the completed second Temple, Ez. 6, 15 etc., Stier. Delitzsch agrees with the last of the three. The author would then be unknown; and the "I" throughout the Psalm would signify Israel returned from exile, and the plural "we" at the end would be a variation of the singular. But to tell the truth, very few Psalms betray their occasion and date with real definiteness. This one reads decidedly like a Psalm of David, especially also the prophetic lines in it. Composed by the king we are free to assume that Israel loved to use this Psalm in later years on various great occasions, and so it **was used** in Ezra's days, and after that as well. The "I" then means David. In "we" he combines himself in a most natural fashion with his people. And let us note that the lines concerning the "stone," v. 23, and "him that cometh in the name of the Lord," v. 26, are not predicated of "I" (David), but stand by themselves to be fulfilled afterwards in Christ.

14. **The LORD is my strength and song,
and is become my salvation.**
15. **The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in
the tabernacles of the righteous:
the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.**
16. **The right hand of the LORD is exalted:
the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.**

As Ezra once used this Psalm to voice the praises of the people on the great occasion of laying the corner-stone of the second Temple, so we to-day use it on the greater occasion when by his resurrection from the dead Christ became the Head of the Corner in the everlasting Temple of the Church. All the lines fit our Easter joy. In fact v. 22-24 fit fully only this supreme occasion and its joy, for they are pro-

phetic and reach far beyond David, Ezra, or any event prior to Christ. — Our text begins with the jubilant lines of praise, as a Psalm text for Easter should. The first two lines are a quotation from Moses' song beside the Red Sea after the Egyptians had perished, Ex. 15, 2. **The LORD, Yah,** is the Eternal One, a title for Jehovah used as a separate term mostly in poetry. He who changes, weakens, fails never, is David's and our **strength**, *'azzi* in the sense of power that makes one great and famous; **and song**, *zimrah* (plucking), means playing the harp, and by metonymy the object of song and praise. Koenig thinks it probable that the two terms are meant to be combined in the Hebrew, in the sense of "my praiseworthy source of protection." Note that the Hebrew has no possessive with the second noun "song." — The reason for the praise uttered in the first line is stated in the second: **and is become my salvation**, *y^eshu'ah*, deliverance, victory, the word from which "Jesus," Savior, is derived. The Eternal saved David, and now us, and thus he is our famous power and the subject of our music.

In v. 15 the idea of singing is amplified from v. 14. There resounds **the voice of rejoicing and salvation**. *Rinnah* is jubilant exclamation, pointing to the manner; while *y^eshu'ah* points to the cause of the rejoicing and the subject of the joyful expressions. — One may hear this **voice**, or sound, **in the tabernacles of the righteous**, and may think of festive guests in their tents and temporary shelters about Jerusalem at the festival seasons, when many pilgrims could not find lodging within the city and had to camp outside. But the word is perfectly proper also as a practical designation for the homes and dwelling places of the Lord's people. We are not always at the services, and our joy is taken with us from our set festival worship. — But note the designation for these people, *tsaddiqim*, **the righteous**, they who have the divine

verdict in their favor, who stand justified at the divine bar of judgment. There is always the forensic and the declarative idea, as Cremer, *Woerterb.*, 10th ed. by Jul. Koegel, exhaustively shows in the article δικαιώω. And since no man on earth is righteous or able to secure God's verdict of acquittal by works of his own, "righteous" means justification by faith for the sake of Christ's merits. All acquired righteousness, i. e. by works of ours, is insufficient. In the old covenant the righteous trusted in God's grace promised in the Messiah, in the new covenant they trust in the same grace and Messiah as having come. — Now follows the song of victory which the righteous sing in their tabernacles: **The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.** The Lord's right hand is his omnipotent power. Whatever other manifestations of this power have shone forth to its glory, that in raising Christ from the dead and thereby making him the eternal foundation of salvation is the greatest for us. The predicate '*osah chayil*, **doeth valiantly**, means to perform deeds of power, hence Luther's version: *behaelt den Sieg.* — In consequence: **The right hand of the LORD is exalted**, which, however, should read transitively: "exalts," since *romemah*, with the preformative *m^e* dropped, from the verb *rum*, is the polel. The object is omitted, but may well in thought and for the Easter season include us as well as the risen Christ. — In a refrain the first line of praise is added once more: **The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.** All the glory is thus emphatically given to the Lord. One thought of the Easter victory, which is a triumph over death and hell, is surely enough to make us all join in this song of victory, giving all praise to the Lord. The triple repetition of "the right hand" Spurgeon, following others, has referred to the Trinity. But this can hardly be because of the predicates, the first and third of which are identical.

17. **I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the LORD.**
18. **The LORD hath chastened me sore:
but he hath not given me over unto death.**

The comment of Taube on these lines is excellent: "God's people was led a hundred times into distress, often to the very threshold of death, yet it did not perish, it celebrated again and again a resurrection day through God's gracious help; for from this people He was to come in whom Israel and all the ends of the world were to see the salvation of God. And so Israel is the type of the Church which is able with Paul, 2 Cor. 6, 9, to boast at all times: 'as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed.' As Israel's calling was to point forward to Him, so the calling of the Church in the new covenant is to point back to Him, and to show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, 1 Pet. 2, 9. God's people does not die." Add the remarks of Geo. Horne: "As Christ is risen, 'we shall not die, but live'; we shall not die eternally, but we shall live in this world the life of grace, and in the world to come the life of glory; that we may in both declare the 'works' and chant the praises of God our Savior. We are 'chastened' for our sins, but 'not given over to death' and destruction everlasting; nay, our being 'chastened' is now a proof that we are not so given over; 'for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?' Hebr. 12, 7." — V. 17 and 18 recall v. 13, only the inflictions of our foes are now viewed as chastisements sent us by the Lord. The *ki* in v. 17 is adversative and equals *ki 'im*; and in v. 18 the absolute infinitive piel *yassar* intensifies the verb *yiss^eranni*, from *yasar*, "to chasten with chastisement," **chastened sore**. The doubling of *nun* is after the analogy of the imperfect, Koenig.

19. **Open to me the gates of righteousness:
I will go into them, and I will praise the
LORD.**
20. **This gate of the LORD,
into which the righteous shall enter.**
21. **I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me,
and art become my salvation.**

Delitzsch and Daechsel dramatize the Psalm, as though it were written specifically for the dedication of the second Temple. V. 1-4 is the start of the pilgrim procession, Israel, the house of Aaron, and the proselytes bidden to fall in line. V. 5-18 is the chant as they all march. V. 19 the call to open the Temple gates as the procession arrives. V. 20-27 the reply of those receiving the procession. V. 28 the answer of the procession, v. 29 the chorus of all the worshippers together. Well, with a bit of imagination a good deal may be done! No need here to show how untenable such dramatization is on the face of it. Thus v. 19-20, or 19-21 must go together, spoken and sung in one strain. V. 20 etc. cannot be split off from v. 19 and made an answer to the call for opening the Temple gates. Nor can we think that the gates are barred and shut at first, and then were thrown open to receive the procession. This procession itself is a myth, like the barred gates. In fact it is merely a guess that this Psalm was used in some way at the dedication of the second Temple. We do not know that it was. As stated above we have some ground only for its use at the corner-stone laying. **Open the gates etc.** means that David wanted to praise the Lord also in the sanctuary. This is a call for the public service and worship of Israel in which David wanted to join the people in praising and thanking the Lord. The word *sha'ar* is used constantly of gates such as cities had, and in compounds for the different gates of Jeru-

salem. Yet the word "Temple," or any equivalent for it, is absent in v. 19-20. To conclude from the word **gates** that the Temple, and in particular the second Temple, must have been built when this Psalm was composed, seems hasty, for most certainly the portals to the sanctuary in David's time could also be termed **gates of righteousness**. In Ezra's time, when the corner-stone was laid, our Psalm was sung, yet at that time there was only the foundation for the walls, no gates as yet at all, and yet the singers used these lines mentioning "the gates." One must keep a proper balance in all things, and most certainly in exegesis. — Not a few are quick to conclude that **the gates of righteousness** are so named here because only the righteous were supposed to enter there. Well, that would have debarred the poor publican who had to confess himself a sinner. Yet he entered the Temple, though he stood afar off at the entrance. He entered as a sinner, but he left justified. In other words he found and obtained the righteousness that avails before God in the sanctuary. "The gates of righteousness" are so named because they are connected with righteousness; the genitive expresses quality or character, stronger than an adjective would be, yet of the same nature, adjectival. These gates admit to the Lord, who bestows righteousness, to the altar where righteousness is dispensed, to the Gospel preaching which confers righteousness upon the souls of poor sinners. In particular, our risen Lord is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. 2, 30. On Easter day every church in which the Savior's resurrection is properly preached opens its doors to the worshippers as "gates of righteousness." — **I will go into them, I will praise the LORD**, is the reason for asking that the gates be opened. 'Odeh is the hipil from *yadah*. — The repetition: **this gate of the LORD**, bids us dwell on the term, and at the same time, by the new addition

“unto,” or for, *Yahveh*, bids us connect the righteousness mentioned before with the covenant Lord. The gate is for him in order to admit us unto him. Yet the clause: **into which the righteous shall enter**, or: “the righteous may enter there,” is not intended at this late point to explain why the gates are called “gates of righteousness,” viz. because the righteous may enter them. The righteous love this gate. There they entered and found the Lord in his righteousness. Hence their constant desire to return, and their joy that they are again and again admitted into the Lord’s presence. They who despise this righteousness, who have definitely chosen unrighteousness, who care nothing for the Lord’s verdict of acquittal, pass by this gate of the Lord and choose the gates of wickedness, the temples of unbelief, the halls of worldliness. — Just as the idea of “the gates” has been rounded out with a few added strokes, so also the idea of praise. In v. 19 David simply says that he will praise the Lord. He now repeats that, for he is full of the desire, but now he adds the reason: **I will praise thee, for thou hast heard me**. All answered prayer is a subject of praise, and the most delightful one. Especially is this true when the hearing deals with spiritual blessings, with the Lord’s grace and kingdom, with forgiveness, peace, and joy. — The Lord’s hearing is the intermediate step. There should follow what this hearing bestows. It does here: **and art become my salvation**, freedom, deliverance. The text reads: “and art for me for salvation.” The Lord and the salvation are combined in one idea. When he is ours, salvation is ours. It is not like money from which the giver separates himself in the giving, and which the receiver may take and leave the giver, and may even forget him. No wonder David wanted to enter again and again the Lord’s gate, for the closer he got to the Lord the more he possessed and enjoyed the salvation bound up in him.

22. **The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.**
23. **This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.**
24. **This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.**

Every commentator who tries to find a historical type back of these words, weakens and cheapens them. So when the old *Historia Scholastica* reports a tradition that the builders of the second Temple rejected repeatedly a certain stone, and finally found it the very stone to put in the most honorable place, this "tradition" must be set down as a late invention fabricated somehow to meet this supposed need of a literal historical type. Yet it does not meet the words of the text, for the builders never changed their minds as the mythical legend asserts. It was the Lord himself who put that rejected stone in its place, contradicting the judgment of the builders who never had any use for this stone. Did anything like that happen either when Solomon, or when Ezra, built the Temple? There is not even legend or tradition to that effect. Regretfully Langsdorff has to admit: "the historical and typical interpretation is exceedingly difficult." It is more, namely impossible. When Daechsel blames the older commentators for ignoring type and history in their interpretations, and for expounding these words directly of Christ, he shows only that he himself is to be blamed. His attempt to furnish the type and historical basis proves it. He dreams that he has found it in Ez. 3, 10-13, where many Jews wept over the poverty of the new Temple foundation when they compared it with the glories of Solomon's Temple. Where is there as much as the mention of a corner-stone? This is the way with some commentators, the pious ones as well as the

scientific ones: when they think they need something they invent it, and dream they have found it where perhaps there is not even a trace of it. Even Delitzsch comes with such dreams. He, too, talks about the weeping, Ez. 3, 12 etc., of the difficulties of Zerubbabel, and then slips in the remark, that the Lord smoothed down these difficulties, "and enabled Zerubbabel to bring out of its previous hiding the gable and keystone and thus to complete the building. But Zerubbabel was himself one of the "builders," and all of these, our text says, rejected this stone. It never was hidden at all, but lay there openly, all the builders measured it, and all of them cast it aside and never reversed their verdict. Nor was this a gable-stone, or a keystone, which is just nothing but a perversion. And to top it off, Ez. 3, 12 etc. says not a single word about any stone whatever. For the fact is and remains: in the history of Israel there is no historical incident which can possibly be taken as a type of this stone rejected by the builders and yet by the Lord's doing made the head of the corner. Let us be exegetically honest, and admit the fact!

But how then interpret this verse? It is a plain case of revelation, and the writing down of it a plain case of verbal Inspiration. David has just said that he wanted to go into the Lord's sanctuary to praise him because he, the Lord, had become David's salvation. Of course, those interpreters who think this "salvation" was some deliverance of David from his enemies, or the deliverance of Israel in Ezra's time enabling them to complete their new Temple, come to a dead stop at the end of v. 21, and are up in the air, so to speak, when v. 22 follows about this strange stone. They see no way out except by somehow getting hold of a historical type. But David meant **salvation** in the fullest sense of the word. He had used the word already in v. 14. He had added another equally significant, namely "righteousness" and

had sung about "the righteous." Let us bear these things in mind. And then let us ask: How did the Lord himself become David's (and, of course, also our) "salvation"? How could there be "gates of righteousness" so that poor sinners could enter them and find everlasting righteousness, the verdict of acquittal from their sins at the judgment bar of the Eternal? How could they after that come again and again to that gate of the Lord and be accepted by him as "the righteous"? Well, v. 22-24 is the answer. Jehovah is "salvation" through Christ slain for our sins and raised again for our justification. This crucified and risen Savior is made unto us righteousness, and we are righteous, like David, through faith in him. By divine revelation David was shown how Jehovah became for him "salvation." The Lord's "doing," marvelous beyond human thought, was shown to him in advance. The day which the Lord made by this saving act of his was seen by David as if it were present at that very moment. We know from the New Testament, 1 Pet. 2, 6-8; Eph. 2, 20; Matth. 21, 42, compare Is. 28, 6, that this is Easter day, the day we are again celebrating. But the Lord did more, he guided David's mind and pen by the blessed act of Inspiration to record the great saving act of Jehovah. A figure, brief, striking, and in every way exceptional, was suggested to him, and his pen set it down in simple words: a stone, rejected by the builders, made the head of the corner by Jehovah himself — this marvelous act, done on one noteworthy day, this is how Jehovah became our salvation. The Lord might, of course, have given David some other figure for recording this blessed revelation; or he might have guided David's mind and pen to set it down in literal, unfigurative terms. These are side matters. The figure chosen by the Lord is perfect for its purpose, and the New Testament quotations of it have made this figure in all truly Christian literature one of the

great vehicles for describing the Lord's act in making himself our salvation for ever. After ages of exegesis some things surely ought finally to be settled. Let us hope that from now on this is one of them.

All the dust that has been raised about the stone should not blind us to the fact that the words David wrote are exceedingly simple and clear. **The stone the builders refused etc.** really reads like a brief parable. There was a certain stone, and there were builders busily at work. They took other stones and placed them in the building, but this particular stone they discarded, *ma'am*, "to reject," despise, count worthless. They had no use at all for this stone, threw it out completely, would not put it even in an inconspicuous place in the wall. It was not *improbaverunt*, disliked, but *reprobaverunt*, utterly reprobated for any position in the wall at all. — Now this stone **is become the head of the corner.** The entire little parable is blurred and confused when Delitzsch, to get in his historical type, says that the workmen had inferior material throughout for the second Temple, and thus at first "refused" to use also this stone. Now, it is all right, in view of the New Testament references, to add to David's little parable the idea that it was a temple these builders worked on; but there is no justification whatever for calling all the material these builders had inferior. If the temple idea is added here we are free to think of Solomon's Temple just as well as of Ezra's, or for that matter of Herod's. But as to the stones and material there is the very opposite idea. These builders are plainly viewed as finding all the other stones serviceable and refusing only this one stone as of no worth and use at all. And the astonishing thing is that this stone, which the building experts utterly rejected, became the supreme stone of all, namely "the head of the corner." This happened, as is evidently implied, in spite of the builders. Why they did or could not prevent

it is outside of our parable. It deals only with this very, very strange fact. And as far as historical parallels are concerned it is plain there could be none, for in all ordinary building operations the builders, namely architects and contractors, have the final decision as to sound material, so that any stone they would reject could not possibly get into the structure, to say nothing about becoming the corner-stone. — Delitzsch tells us that *ro'sh phinnah* cannot be translated "corner-stone," yet he admits that tradition etc. demands it, and yields. But Koenig mentions our passage, and writes in so many words: "head of the corner = corner-stone." So this is not the stone at the top of the gable, or the keystone of an arch, or the capstone of a pillar at the eaves where the gable starts. But with this settled it still remains to clear up just what a corner-stone is meant for, since there are some queer, incorrect notions about it, and they are actually used in preaching. Delitzsch, for instance, says of the corner stone: "protecting and supporting the impressive building," which is fanciful and wrong. In the first place, do not confound the foundation and the corner-stone. Christ can be called either, but the building as a building never rests on the corner-stone, only on the foundation, of which the corner-stone, too, is a part. This corner-stone does not merely join two walls meeting at right angles, and when applied to Christ connect Jewish and Gentile Christians. Then at every angle we would have to have a connecting stone at the corner. Yet there is even in very elaborate buildings only one corner-stone. Nor does the corner-stone hold the whole building together, an impossible fancy. Nor is the corner-stone merely the chief stone, say the one that completes the foundation. The real function of the corner-stone is to determine by its own angle all the other angles and thus all the other lines of the building. Because of this governing function this is the most significant

stone in the entire building. It has therefore been idealized, and is always laid with significant ceremonies. How Christ can be called the corner-stone of the Church thus at once becomes apparent. He it is who determines every angle and every wall line in this spiritual structure. David adds no word of interpretation to this little parable gem of his. All we have is in the preceding line: "thou art become my salvation." But the New Testament is plain: this stone refused, and then made by the Lord himself the corner-stone is Jesus Christ crucified by the Jewish leaders, Israel's called and official builders, and raised from the dead and made the head over all things to the Church, Eph. 1, 22.

In v. 23 David adds the vital point: **This is the LORD'S doing.** There is no accident about it, nor a later change of judgment on the part of "the builders." No, the way indicated by this parable for the Lord himself to become our salvation is wholly his own doing. One may well say, no human being could or would ever have expected the Lord to select and carry out such a way. — When David contemplates it, and he must have had a true conception of what he wrote on that stone, he is constrained to exclaim: **it is marvelous in our eyes.** The verb *niphla'th*, niph'al from *phala'*, which means "to be wonderful," is the 3rd pers. fem. because of the feminine *z'oth* preceding, and is varied from *niphl'ah*. The verb means "to be wonderful." **In our eyes** suggests that we should look at it most carefully, that thus we may see what David saw.

V. 24 certainly is not without connection with what precedes it. What day is meant when David sings: **This is the day the LORD hath made?** Funny, but Matthew Henry makes it "the Christian Sabbath"! This is not exegesis, but foolish notion, like others offered by this man. Though there are a few others who also have the "Sabbath" idea. Kessler

simply takes this day to be the day when the Psalm was used at the dedication of the second Temple. So at times the two lines of v. 24 are still used, and "the day" is taken to be the festive day that happens to be celebrated. In a way the latter is not incorrect, namely if it is understood that the festival and its significance of grace and salvation is an outflow of the great saving act by which Jehovah became our salvation. But really and literally **the day which the Lord hath made** is the day when the Lord raised Christ from the dead, namely Easter day. Note the close connection: 1) *Thou art become my salvation*, v. 21; 2) *This is the Lord's doing*, v. 23; 3) *This the day which the Lord hath made*. The Lord's "doing" and his "making" is one and the same act. If now we apply David's line to our present Easter festival which commemorates the Lord's saving act, we are justified. — **We will rejoice and be glad in it** must be understood accordingly, namely in that day of the Lord's doing and making. For David it lay in the future, but like Abraham he saw it and was glad. For us it lies in the past, and we now look back to it and rejoice in it. *Gul* means "turn for joy," jubilate, *exultare*; and *sameach*, "to be glad," *laetatus est*. The doubling of the verbs is for emphasis. With the Lord himself become our salvation in raising our Redeemer from the grave, who would not rejoice and be glad?

SUGGESTIONS

The preacher's task is to preach Christ's resurrection from this text so that the text is actually used in the sermon as a proper text should be. Some have preached practically only on the resurrection of Christ and its fruits, and have let the text lie, at most putting in only a phrase from it here and there as if for decorative purposes. — Here is a Psalm text which admits of analytical treatment. Langsdorff, for instance, lifts out these three in their order in the text and in their reference

to the risen Christ: 1) The right hand of the Lord; 2) The gate of righteousness; 3) The head stone of the corner. He puts these three under the theme: Our Song of Triumph for the Victory of the Prince of Life. Another in analytical form is by Deichert: The Victory of the Risen Christ and its Far Reaching Results (a theme that might be much improved in form): 1) Death is conquered; 2) The gates of righteousness are open; 3) The corner-stone of the Church is laid. — Here we may quote also Kessler's division:

The Easter Psalm of the Children of God.

They praise — at the open grave of Jesus Christ —

- I. *Our God's glorious might.*
- II. *Our God's redeeming love.*
- III. *Our God's marvelous wisdom.*

"Victorious" might would be better, for part one tells of the mighty victory over death and hell, granting us that we should not die, but live forever, v. 14-18. Part two utilizes what is said in the Psalm on righteousness and salvation, delivering us from sin and guilt by Christ's sacrifice, and pronouncing us just through his resurrection, v. 19-21. Part three elaborates the marvelous wisdom by unfolding God's act in lifting the despised and rejected Man of Sorrows to the right hand of glory as our eternal Redeemer and King. The conclusion uses the praise, thanks, and faith evinced in the Psalm, as an admonition to us to show the same appreciation.

But the text invites also to synthesis. We may start from one of its high focal points, and, building a theme from that, make all its rays shine from this central light. A theme of this type would be

The Lord Himself is Become Our Salvation.

- I. *By the resurrection he made his own Son the head of the corner.*
- II. *By the resurrection he made his own Son our righteousness.*
- III. *By the resurrection he made his own Son for us the fountain of life eternal.*

Because the figure of the rejected stone is so prominent in the text and so significantly used otherwise in the New Testament its use as a central thought on Easter day is fully justified. Koegel has the following outline: Jesus Christ, the Cru-

cified, the Stone Refused by the Builders, by His Resurrection is Become the Corner Stone. That, we testify first of all, is I. The Lord's doing, a marvel of his righteousness in our eyes. Is it, however, also, so we ask secondly, II. The marvel of his mercy in our own souls? This division, however, seems too formal, offering only two aspects of the fact stated in the theme, and not actually dividing that fact.—A better treatment is that by Thieme:

**The Right Hand of the Lord Doeth Valiantly:
The Stone, Refused by the Builders, is Become
the Head of the Corner.**

- I. *Christ sank under the condemnation of his foes; but God made him the Lord and Judge over all.*
- II. *Christ suffered shame and pain; but through the sufferings of death God crowned him with glory and honor.*
- III. *Christ tasted of the bitter death of crucifixion; but by death destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light.*

The parts here are long in their wording, especially for an impressive festival sermon, yet they are suggestive, and are offered here for the preacher to improve upon.—Instead of splitting on the idea that a stone *refused* by the builders was made by the Lord the *supreme* stone, let us split on the idea itself of a *corner-stone*, here called "the head of the corner." For that is what Christ became through his resurrection, taking it always as a matter of course, that resurrection involves a previous death, and Christ's death and resurrection as redemptive and saving for us.

The Risen Savior the Corner Stone of the Church.

- I. *There is no salvation, except that won by him.*
- II. *There is no righteousness, except that won by him.*
- III. *There is no true life, except that won by him.*

The three ideas in the parts are derived from the text. Salvation is considered as requiring righteousness; and salvation and righteousness are considered as producing true life. And as regards the idea of the corner stone, hold fast that it directs and governs all the angles of the building. So here. Every true thought line concerning salvation, righteousness, and life, and all that pertains to any of these three is directed and governed wholly by the risen Christ. To let any substitute

for Christ direct the lines of our teaching, thought, and faith, regarding salvation, etc., is to have them misdirected, so that a church built on such lines neither saves nor justifies, neither gives true life nor preserves it in death. — There are two other pivotal thoughts in the text:

The Great Easter Call:

"Open to Me the Gates of Righteousness!"

- I. *They swing open in Christ's resurrection from the dead.*
- II. *They admit to salvation and life eternal.*

Easter: the Day Which the Lord Hath Made.

- I. *By making Christ the head of the corner.*
- II. *By himself becoming our salvation.*
- III. *By opening to us the gates of righteousness.*
- IV. *By granting us to live, and not die.*
- V. *By giving us the voice of rejoicing and salvation.*

The aim in a formulation like this must always be to preserve in the phrasing as much of the text color as possible, i. e., expressions which to the hearer at once suggest the text used. It is always a mistake, and therefore a weakness, in formulating theme and parts, to omit or lose this element of color, which usually occurs when we try to restate the thought of the text by words of our own, especially when we have allowed the thought to become abstract, perhaps even have generalized it. Cultivate the love of text color! There is nothing finer even in form than the *ipsissima verba* S. S. Say what men will on the style of the holy writers, their forms of expression are the height of perfection, and have never been equaled by uninspired men.

QUASIMODOGENITI

Gen. 32, 22-31

Why this text for the octave of Easter? What is the Easter thought in it? We may quote Delitzsch who compares this contest with its New Testament counterpart, the one in Gethsemane, etc. "There he who is Abraham's Seed at the point of completion, wrestles amid strong crying and tears, Heb. 5, 7 (cf. Hosea 12, 4: he wept, and made supplication unto him), with God. But not only is his hip dislocated, he must yield and show himself willing to drink the cup of death, so that dying he may prevail over God's wrath and come forth as the Firstborn from the dead. Here the object was not merely to sanctify the natural, but to effect a rebirth of it on through death. Here the object was not merely to attain the blessing of the birthright, upon which a sanctified nationalism might be built up, but to regain, as the beginning of blessing of a reborn new humanity, the original blessing lost unto sin, and not to relinquish the divine righteousness before the morning dawn of grace should break and the sun of love arise. It is finished! The sun which greeted Jacob back of the heights of Peniel has as its counterpart the sun of Resurrection Day." Jacob's victory and Christ's resurrection are related as type and antitype. Both prevailed, the latter in the highest possible sense. Jacob now fully secured the blessing of the birthright from God himself, by which he became the father of the chosen nation; Christ, the true Firstborn, the great Seed himself, "shall see his seed," Is. 53, 10, and "by his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many," v. 11, thus becoming the great Head of the Church.

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To these main correspondences between type and anti-type add the minor ones: the mystery in this wrestling with God and prevailing, apparent in both type and antitype; the injury to Jacob's hip, and the death and the marks of the nails and the spear upon the body of Jesus; the tears and crying mentioned in Hos. 12, 4 for the type, and in Hebr. 5, 7 for Christ; the contending of both in reality with God, though men (Esau — the Jews) were involved; finally the sun rising over Peniel and on Easter morning when Jesus left the grave. — What shall we say when in the latest and most scientific commentary on the Old Testament Proksch in his *Genesis*, p. 187 etc. calls our text a "myth" the sources of which lie outside of the Yahveh-religion, since the name *Yahveh* is avoided and an unknown 'El, or the 'El of Peniel, is the original wrestler. The nightly hour, the hip put out of joint in the battle of life and death, the unknown name, are said to indicate some foreign being other than Jehovah. This 'El of Peniel, we are told, whose name probably was Esau (!), tried to prevent Jacob's entrance into his domain, yet in the end was prevailed upon to grant him reception and room. Nothing is said, however, about the blessing granted to Jacob! Why nothing on such a vital feature? To top it all off, this god of Peniel is said to have split in two, the nocturnal divine "kernel" appearing to Jacob at Peniel, while this god, humanized, met Jacob in Esau, and the two supposed legends, one of Edom, and one of Esau, locally separate, were welded into one in the folk-lore of later times. Well, this is how Proksch and the authorities he follows tear our text altogether out of its biblical connection, absolutely disregard all its biblical relation, viz. Hos. 12, 4, the birthright as finally bestowed by God, the blessing, the name "Israel," and the antitype Christ. So the whole account, torn up by the roots from where revelation and inspiration planted it, is treated in the unsanctified imagination

of men who invent local deities ad libitum, and, of course, have visions of legends and combinations of legends at any time of the day or night as they think they need them. The details of the comment by Proksch are all on the same barren level, sprinkled with "it seems" and other like turns, yet made forbidding for the ordinary Bible student by being dosed with plenty of Arabic, Hebrew, and Phœnician references. One despairs as he works through this lifeless dust. If this comment is the real thing the wrestling of Jacob is absolutely useless for the Church of to-day, and like most other Old Testament sections should be cast into the junk-pile of heathen mythology. But the very radicalism of such comment defeats its own object. For the moment we compare it with the interpretation of real biblical scholarship, this overdone radicalism appears in its empty spuriousness, and our minds are relieved. As long as the most learned modernism has nothing better to offer than this spiritual chaff, the rich granaries of the old sound scholarship will find plenty of souls hungry to be fed with real wheat.

22. And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women-servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford of Jabbok.
23. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

This is a simple record of the bare facts as such, after the manner of so much of the inspired writing. Note how all along Moses was led to set down the facts, so much, and no more. A writer unguided and uncontrolled by divine Inspiration would have been certain to try to penetrate beyond the mere facts, especially would he have been tempted to explain the mystery in this account, to draw his own conclusions, and add some of his best opinions. Commentators incline to do these very things now in retelling the story.

Let us be content with the account as the Holy Ghost shaped it for us by the pen of Moses. — Jacob was returning to the land of his fathers by direct command of the Lord, Gen. 31, 3; 32, 9, under the promise: "I will be with thee." But when he heard that Esau was coming to meet him with a band of 400 men he feared greatly, as well he might, recalling how his brother years ago had intended to kill him. Those 400 men upset Jacob. He resorted to prayer, and the words of the prayer are set down for us, Gen. 32, 9-12. It was the right and proper course for a true child of God. While he throws himself wholly upon the protection of God, he does not neglect human prudence and wisdom. The two go well together, for God blesses our efforts in this direction when we put our trust wholly in him, sinners though we are. Jacob divided his people into two companies, so that if one were attacked the other might possibly escape; and to Esau he sent an impressive present, to appease him, if possible. Now while this present was going forward Jacob lodged that night with his company, v. 21. But is seems his disturbed mind would not let him rest. **And he rose up that night from his camp and took further decisive action: and took his two wives, and his two women-servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok, i. e. his entire family: Leah and her six sons; Leah's maid Bilhah and her two sons; Rachel and her son Joseph; and Rachel's maid and her two sons.** The Jabbok flows westward into the Jordan about midway between the Sea of Tiberias and the Dead Sea. Instead of keeping his family on the north banks of the Jabbok, with the stream affording some protection from the men of Esau who were approaching from the south, that very night yet Jacob made his whole family cross the ford to the south side, thus deciding to meet Esau with his entire family the next day. It was like casting a die. It was putting himself in the power of his

brother, but doing this by throwing himself completely upon his God with the assurance that God would not fail him. This crossing at night was a decisive act of faith. — V. 23 repeats, making us dwell on the act, and adds specifications; first, that **he sent them over the brook, *ya'abirem***, from *'abar*, “make them to pass over,” implying that eventually he remained behind; and **he sent over that he had**, besides the persons, all his other possessions.

24. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

The verb *yathar*, here the niph'al *yivvater*, means “to be left,” to be left over. One can imagine the sensations and thoughts of lone Jacob on the north side of the river, with all his family and property on the south side, all in the middle of the night, and a decisive moment approaching. Stosch writes: “He had cheated Esau out of his birthright, and thus had caused Esau to secure for himself a territory among the Horites of the mountains of Seir, where his power and ability found an outlet. In this night Jacob very likely felt how gravely he had sinned against his brother. He had turned him into an enemy who by ties of blood was his friend. Now he was helpless and was irretrievably delivered up to the vengeance of his brother, unless the miraculous power of God should save him. To seek this power of God, he remains alone on the north banks of the Jabbok.” Evidently he intended to wrestle still further with God in prayer. — Now the most mysterious occurrence of that memorable night for Jacob is set down for us in the simplest words: **and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.** *Shachar* is “dawn,” the morning-red; and *'aloth*, the infinitive construct from *'alah*, “to rise”; thus “the rising dawn.” The verb, the imperfect niph'al, is an ancient form, *ye'abeq*,

from the presumed *'abaq*, used only in this account; and means to roll in the dust, "to wrestle." Keil thinks that the river Jabbok got its name from this verb, but Koenig and others deny any linguistic connection, the river's name being from *baqaq*, which probably means "to split." — In the deep darkness, Jacob being all alone, a second person suddenly clasps him about the body and endeavors to throw him down. Instinctively Jacob begins his defense. The two strain and tug, each seeking to master the other. Perhaps they actually roll in the dust, then rising again in combat. Jacob's strange opponent utters never a word. Silently the conflict goes on — how long we are not told, but apparently a few hours anyway. Daechsel: *eine geraume Zeit*. Delitzsch writes: "Jacob's battle is not a battle in a dream, but a spiritual-physical reality, a labor of the spirit under straining of the body. Him with whom he battles, he has not *within* himself, but *outside* of himself, and *in front* of himself. In face of his meeting with Esau it now comes plainly to view that he does not possess the blessing of the birthright without the stain of sin. On that score he is assailed, not only by his own conscience, but by Jehovah himself, who makes him feel this. But the faith in the innermost part of Jacob breaks through sin and weakness and tribulation; masters the accusation, which as it were has taken form in this mysterious man and which hurls itself against him; and by reaching on through the hostile attitude of his opponent grasps his mercy, and wrests from him anew the blessing threatened with destruction, which now, with the dross removed, cleansed of sin, glorified, he receives as a divine gift; and that as a gift of grace, yet not without being made to feel the powerlessness of his natural condition by the dislocation of his hip in this faith-conquering battle." Little more can be said. Spiritual wrestling and agonizing we understand, also that this strangely

affects the body at the time. But here this is combined with a physical contest against a human opponent who is really more than human. One of the very best comments is Hosea 12, 3-4: "He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God; yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him." Here the prophet describes, as it would seem, the inwardness of the conflict. Jacob prevailed, not by physical prowess, but by weeping and supplicating. Kurtz thinks this weeping and praying must be identified with the words: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." But this can hardly be correct. Jacob's crying and praying must have preceded that final declaration. Heim finely says: "The more earnestly he contended, the nearer he came in his innermost feeling to his opponent as his truest friend." Stosch adds: "That is how it is. While Jacob is assailed by this strange person, as though the latter meant to harm and kill him, . . . Jacob wrestles for the blessing of him who opposes him. He wrestles for his life. But he does not seek to rid himself of his opponent, but to hold him and to win him for himself. For in his blessing lies Jacob's life. Thus the real part of the battle lies in the tears of repentance and in the fervent supplication of faith. In this wrestling for the blessing and the grace he was stronger than the Holy One, who chastised his natural strength. Thus in this night the true strength of Jacob was born. His natural strength had to be defeated. His strength of faith, born from repentance, had to win the victory."

25. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. 26. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let

thee go, except thou bless me. 27. And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob. 28. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. 29. And Jacob asked *him*, Tell *me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore *is* it *that* thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

Merely the facts are related, and their strangeness is left without explanation. The wrestling proceeded till just before dawn. The unnamed man had not conquered Jacob — why not? We cannot say, except that the contest was not a mere physical one. **He saw that he prevailed not against him, *yakol***, “to be able,” “to overcome.” — But Jacob was not to be left with the idea that his physical power had made him prevail. So this unnamed man **touch****ed the hollow, *kaph***, the “pan,” of his thigh. This was not part of the wrestling, else we would have been told that in the end the unnamed man did prevail. The words read as if the act were miraculous — a mere touch of the hand to the front part or inner side of the thigh, and behold, this is dislocated, **out of joint**, the thigh bone put out of its socket, *yaqa'*, “to fall out.” This was in the midst of the wrestling. Some suppose that Jacob never noticed the damage to his hip, but wrestled on a while, till the strange man attempted to leave. But why suppose impossibilities? The wrestling ceased on the instant when that hip was dislocated, a mighty painful thing, and one rendering any wrestler altogether helpless. — When now the man bade Jacob: **Let me go**, all we can suppose is that Jacob clung to him tightly with his arms, not wrestling, just clinging, and the man trying to disengage himself. The physical part of the contest was finished. One wonders why the mighty touch that could throw a hip out of joint was not also used to

break the hold of Jacob's arms, or to hurl the man, now weakened, to the ground. For some reason, and certainly not a physical one, Jacob is able to hold this man, and the man cannot leave until Jacob permits him to leave. The power of the clinging arms is spiritual. — The reason, too, why this man wants Jacob to let him go is strange: **for the day breaketh**, cf. the similar phrase in v. 24. This reason can mean only that the breaking day will permit Jacob to see his antagonist's face, a thing that must not be. Jacob's exclamation in v. 30 reveals what here is hinted at. — How soon Jacob had perceived that the man he wrestled with was no mere man, how soon it flashed into his mind that this man was a theophany, God appearing to him in human form, who is able to say? One thing is clear, Jacob knows with whom he is dealing when he makes the answer: **I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.** We may say that this is strange now on Jacob's part — as if he could surely hold the man until he had extorted the blessing. Yet the man by asking that Jacob let him go, had implied that Jacob could hold him. The man's request sounds like some of the words and actions of Jesus, when he plainly wants men to constrain him. At Emmaus he made as if he would go on, to see whether the two disciples would hold and invite him in. When he walked upon the sea, he acted as if he would pass the boat, but they took him in. In the other storm at sea he slept, as if he would see whether they would think to arouse him and ask his help. He even seemed to refuse the Canaanitish woman at first, as if only to call out fully all her faith in him. So here in Jacob's case. Jacob *can* indeed hold this man and get of him his heart's desire; the man implies it and thus admits it, and Jacob is quick to perceive and act on it. It was by faith alone, this wonderful spiritual power with God, that Jacob held the man. — There was no doubt that Jacob would thus obtain the blessing. The

verb used is *bereq*, "to praise," and then "to bless." When men bless God they do it with words; when God blesses a man his words are coupled with deeds. But did not Jacob have the covenant blessing? And when God bade him return, Gen. 31, 3, had he not promised: "And I will be with thee?" What then is this blessing he is so bent on getting now? Jacob indeed had the revelations at Bethel and Mahanaim, Gen. 32, 1, yet the fear of Esau so gripped him that he could find no full assurance in his soul. This was because of his bad conscience over against Esau in having snatched the birthright blessing in a self-willed and cunning way. What Jacob must often have felt in his soul comes out fully this night when God himself appears as his opponent. It was far less a question regarding Esau than one regarding God. So God in the form of man wrestled with Jacob. By his repentant tears and the supplication of his faith, as Hosea points out, Jacob prevailed over God. It is the one and only way for us to-day to prevail with him. Thus the blessing that Jacob was so bent on securing, and that now was finally granted him, was the complete deliverance of his conscience from the depressing guilt and sense of sin that had still rested upon it, and the possession of the covenant blessing as the full and free gift of God to him.

The bestowal of this blessing is now briefly described, v. 27 etc. Jacob is asked for his name. Not that he who asks does not already know, but that the bearer of that name may become clearly conscious of its meaning in relation to his own past life. He states that it is **Jacob** (from *qo*) "supplanter," one who outwits another, Koenig. It is the old name of the patriarch, befitting his faulty human nature. He had indeed by cunning outwitted and supplanted his older twin brother. — **And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob**, which does not mean that no one shall use this name again, but that from this

time on in the sight of God this name "Jacob" shall no longer characterize the patriarch, as marking his character and his nature. — Instead, a new name shall characterize him, given him by God himself, namely **Israel**, *Yisrael*, from *sarah*, "to contend," and 'El, "God," hence "Contender with God," *Gotteskaempfer*. — This derivation is supported by the English Revised Version, when it translates the reason for the bestowal of this name as follows: "for *thou hast striven* with God and with men." The Authorized Version has: **for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men.** So also the margin has for "Israel" "a prince of God," *sar* = "prince." This derivation goes back to old authorities like the LXX, Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome. Yet "hast power" should be omitted, and we should translate: "Thou art a prince with God and with men, so that thou didst prevail." But however attractive in a way this old derivation of "Israel" may still appear, since Gesenius the rendering "Contender with God" has been generally taken as the true one. Young's *Concordance* compromises and has "ruling with God," going back to the verb *sarar*, "to rule," from which *sar* and *sarah*, "prince" are derived. The name "Israel" or "Contender with God and men" expresses exactly what took place on that memorable night on the banks of Jabbok. — The addition: **and hast prevailed**, is necessary, for the contender contended not in vain. If he had lost, the name "Israel" would certainly not have been in place. Thou hast striven with God and **with men** cannot refer to the "man" with whom Jacob wrestled, nor to any previous contests in Jacob's life (Esau, Laban), but to the victory which Jacob gained over God, since that for all the coming days assured him of being victorious over men. In this very night by wresting the blessing from God, Israel had also won over Esau and his host of 400. Whoever prevails by repentance, faith, and prayer with

God, need fear no man. — One may ask, why 'El was used here, designating God as the Mighty One, and not *Yahveh*, designating him in his grace. Certainly not because Jacob prevailed over omnipotence as such, for that is impossible. But more likely because even God's might is against the sinner, and even his might becomes our friend when we cling to God in repentance and faith. — When Abraham and Sarah received their new names from God they dropped their former ones, and henceforth used only the new. In the case of Jacob this was different, he uses this new name Israel only exceptionally, like a noble title, to be employed only at solemn moments, and then with a look up to God. So, for instance, when he is about to bless his sons: "Hearken unto Israel your father." Gen. 49, 2. When "Israel" afterwards was used for the nation, and even in New Testament times, it likewise came to be used as a name of honor, and was not employed in a common way. The exception was in the use of this name for the northern kingdom, as distinguished from Judah. The reason why "Israel" did not supplant the place of "Jacob" can hardly be that "Israel" contained an obligation beside the promise. Really it contained, in its verbal composition, neither promise nor obligation, but recorded a distinct and mysterious historical incident in the bearer's life. It was on account of this peculiar significance that "Contender" did not crowd out "Supplanter." It was natural that it should not.

This dealing with significant names, it would seem, induced Jacob on his part to ask: **Tell me, I pray thee, thy name.** *Na* is translated: "I pray thee"; we might render it "please." Not that Jacob did not already know full well that he was dealing with a manifestation of God himself. Hosea makes that more than plain. Nor is this curiosity, to hear how this man in whom Jacob met God would designate himself. Rather, we may say, Jacob desired a

still fuller manifestation of God. — That also explains the refusal to accede to his wish: **Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?** which means to say: Let the revelation already vouchsafed to thee suffice. In other words Jacob already had all that God had meant to convey to him. No special name was needed. While the darkness was still complete, and neither form nor features could be distinguished, the wonderful presence was gone. But may the exegete inquire more closely? V. 24 designates this presence as “a man,” *'ish*, so that there must have been a *human* form of flesh and blood, Eph. 6, 12. Hosea 12, 4, however, reads: “He had power over *the angel*, and prevailed.” With Delitzsch we may say: “It was a manifestation of God who by means of an angel made himself present in the form of a man.” Frequently angels appeared to those who beheld them as young men. But when von Hofmann here again denies that this angel was the Son of God, we must recall the Arianism for which Philippi scored this man, who thinks that Christ is $\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ only because of his birth from the Virgin Mary, that the Logos in John’s Prolog signifies nothing but the Gospel, that the *Mal’ak Yahveh* was a created angel, and that God revealed himself as triune from eternity simply because of what he intended to do in time. See Micah 5, 2 in the text for Christmas and our comment there. Stosch should have known better than to quote von Hofmann’s Arian comment on our passage as correct. The being whom Hosea here calls “the angel” is not a created angel, some one of the heavenly hosts. V. 30 contradicts that, where this being is called by Jacob himself “God.” There is only one conclusion, namely that here again we have the *Mal’ak Yahveh*, the uncreated angel who is the Son before his incarnation. He is not only called God in our text, but by giving Jacob the blessing desired he acts as God. — Though he would not name himself to Jacob, he grants Jacob’s

request: **And he blessed him there.** We have already stated in what this blessing consisted, and need to add here only that the blessing must have been bestowed in words of assurance and promise.

30. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. 31. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

What a memorable place for Jacob! No wonder he gave it a special name, **Peniel**, or the more usual form **Penuel**, "Face of 'El," or "Appearance of 'El," transferring to the place what he had seen in that place; cf. also 33, 10. Jacob himself explains the name: **I have seen God face to face, phanim el-phanim.** He means, of course, the angelic-human manifestation of God, not the being of God as such, which no man may see and live, cf. the comment on Ex. 33, 20 and 23 for *Reminiscere*. — At first apparently hostile this wonderful contact of Jacob with God was in the highest degree beneficent: **and my life is preserved**, i. e. from death at the hand of Esau. Luther: *meine Seele ist genesen, thinnatsel*, niph'al from *natsal, erereptus fuit*, has been rescued. Not that the main thing was merely the preservation of his earthly life; we must here sum up all that this deliverance of Jacob involved, for it is all intended to be summed up in this brief statement regarding his soul or life. — **And as he passed over Penuel**, crossing to where his family and belongings were encamped on the other side of the river, **the sun rose upon him**, symbolic of what this conflict meant for Jacob. He had emerged from the night of fear and a disturbed conscience, into the dawn and day of divine assurance, pardon, and peace. — But he carried with him the reminder of his night of conflict: **and**

he halted upon his thigh, one hip was lame for the rest of his life.

NOTE. The wrestling took place on the north bank of the Jabbok, as Keil rightly states, hence Peniel must lie on the north bank, not some distance away from the Jabbok on the south side as various maps locate the place. The exact location of Peniel is not known.

SUGGESTIONS

Our text is found listed for Exaudi and for one or the other after-Trinity Sundays in different pericope systems. This makes a vital difference in regard to the sermon. Using the text for an after-Trinity Sunday the preacher might have to use homiletical application, using the formula: as Jacob, so we. But for Quasimodogeniti, the so-called second Easter, such a use of the text would be a great big homiletical *Missgriff*. For this Sunday the call is homiletical appropriation, and the formula: as Jacob, so Christ. No "lessons," please, from the sin, fear, faith, and blessing of the patriarch, but in the mirror of the patriarch the great image of our Savior who contended for us with God and on Easter morning when the sun rose up brought us the spoils of his victory. These highly exceptional experiences of the patriarchs all through, we may observe, should not be cheapened and dragged down by means of generalization in homiletical application; they should be left in their exceptional character, especially when they refer either to God's great plan of salvation in which the patriarchs were links and integral parts, or when they refer directly to Christ, typifying some portion of his mediatorial work. A text like ours, for instance, in the author's opinion, should be used in preaching only for appropriation, i. e., to bring to the hearers Christ and to stimulate their faith. Please, therefore read again the introductory remarks on the Easter significance of this text.

The natural way, then, to proceed with this text is to make a list of the correspondences between the type Jacob and the antitype Christ as furnished by the account given in our text. This will constitute the real meat of the sermon. Do not let the subjective features in the feelings of Jacob side-track you from the objective points of resemblance between Jacob and the risen Christ. Having made the necessary inner analysis of the typical features in the text, the preacher may take the next step and arrange the material thus gathered into a sermon full of Easter

light. His aim should be to reveal the victory of Christ for the stimulation of our faith in him. At once the obvious theme will suggest itself:

Jacob's Victory at Peniel Reflects the Greater Victory of Christ in Joseph's Garden.

This natural theme may, of course, be worded in various ways as the genius of the preacher may suggest. Stosch, for instance, has: "Christ's Easter Victory, the Victory of the True Contender with God." And a second: "How Jacob Contending with the Angel Reminds us of Christ's Contending and Victory." Now take the first of these three formulations, and list in order the points in which Jacob's victory reflects Christ's at Easter:

- I. *Both had to do with sin.*
- II. *Both dealt with God.*
- III. *Both left a mark on the victors.*
- IV. *Both won an inestimable blessing.*

One of the salient points in the text is the name "Israel" bestowed on Jacob. There is an Easter light in it. Of course, not when the preacher uses cheap application like in *Sermon Sketches on Old Testament Texts*: "When God changes a man's name: I. God gives him a better name; II. God makes him a better man." Only by ignoring both the significance of the Sunday and the chief import of the text can the preacher achieve a sermon so lean and thin. Stosch strikes deeper when he offers us: *Ein oesterliches Kampfgeheimnis im Namen Israel*, which we translate freely: The Easter Mystery when Jacob contended with God and was named Israel: 1. You are to contend with God in repentance and faith; II. He will contend with you in sanctification. But this also lags on the low level of mere application: as Jacob, so we. Why lose the Easter significance? Take a theme like this:

The Easter Light in the Name Israel.

- I. *It means to contend with God and men.*
- II. *It means a glorious victory in the contest.*
- III. *It means a wonderful blessing through the victory.*

All this by means of appropriation: as Jacob, so Christ. Jesus contended *for us*, won the victory *for us*, obtained the blessing *for us*. — One of the best homiletical teachers of a past generation was Wm. J. Mann, who impressed upon his students the sound homiletical principle: always look for the distinctive

thing in your text. Negatively expressed: do not begin to generalize in a superficial way and find in the text only what scores of other texts also contain. Now in our text there is the decidedly distinct act of Jacob's wrestling with God. Let us build on that:

Behold a Man who Wrestled with God!

- I. *An unequal contest, and yet the man prevailed.*
Show the reason for the contest, and by what means the man prevailed.
- II. *A significant contest, for the man points to Christ.*
The Savior's wrestling in Gethsemane and on Golgotha, and how he prevailed.
- III. *A blessed contest, for the blessing he won came down to us through Christ.*
The blessing centers in the name "Israel," borne by God's people of old. We are the New Testament Israel through faith in the risen Christ.

MISERICORDIAS DOMINI

Ps. 23

This is the Text for this Sunday. In the entire Old Testament no better one could be found. A few of the old gospel texts have given such distinctive character to the Sundays for which they were set, that when other texts are selected for these Sundays in new series of pericopes, the choice literally had to be some text of like character. So this Sunday of the Good Shepherd, when in the old gospel Christ calls himself the Good Shepherd, compelled the selection of the Twenty-Third Psalm when an Old Testament text was desired. — Commentators, preachers, and devotional writers all chorus in exalted phrase when they try to describe this Psalm. It is “a pearl of which Helicon need not be ashamed, though Jordan claims it”; “the nightingale of the Psalms”; a pilgrim commissioned of God to go up and down in the whole world singing of divine grace and blessing in every nation and tongue. Language and imagery is almost strained to convey the impression this Psalm has left in men’s hearts. The company of those comforted by its words is made to parade before us, kings and beggars, the sick, the prisoners, the dying, and the penman’s skill is exhausted to portray them all. The spiritual effect of the Psalm in men’s souls is described at length in terms of spiritual experience than which none could be finer. All its praises have been superlative. Form as well as content, literary beauty as well as spirituality are of the very highest. So few words, and yet such incomparable perfection! — When did David compose this Psalm? Its lines have been most carefully examined to find a real clue. Some think

they have succeeded, but really there is nothing definite. We can only say with safety, with Hengstenberg: "The assurance here expressed is not *childlike*, not of one who goes forward into the pains and woes of life, which he has not yet experienced, with joyful serenity; it is the assurance of the *experienced* warrior, of one who has come out of great tribulation The praise of *rest* which the Lord grants makes us recognize the weary pilgrim; his gratitude for restoration shows us one who is exhausted; his 'though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death' etc. one who has already been led on the dark paths of life and approaches still others." Spurgeon is wrong when he thinks it possible that David sang this "pastoral" as he calls it, while still a shepherd with his flock around him. Delitzsch assigns it to the time when David was pursued by Absalom, and thinks he has found in this, and in other Psalms dated by him at this period, the clue that they all express a longing for "the house of the Lord." While David may have composed this Psalm while fleeing from his own son, this is only a guess; the supposed clue does not hold, as the exegesis will show. When Stosch elaborates on Delitzsch and actually describes in detail David's situation on his flight all to match the lines of this Psalm, he is writing pious fiction and nothing more. Let us content ourselves: it is the older David who sings here. We hear the voice of experience ringing true. Yet we hear too the voice of great assurance and calmness, not as one tossed about and crying for help, but of one enjoying the safety of that help and praising Jehovah for it.

Every time the Seminary students are asked to furnish a sermon outline on this Psalm they fall into the error of Spurgeon and others who make this Psalm "David's heavenly pastoral"; they try to squeeze the entire Psalm into the shepherd image. But it

should surely be recognized that the shepherd imagery constitutes only one of the pictures used by the royal singer. And his mind is so rich that one image does not suffice him, he adds others. Rudolf Kittel in the latest commentary on the Psalms still sees only two pictures in the Psalm, that of the shepherd and that of the host. In reality there are four. It is a mistake to extend the shepherd picture beyond v. 3 a. For v. 3 b-4 contains the image of a traveller passing through a dark and dangerous valley. V. 5 is more than the picture of a host; it is the picture of a stronghold so safe that its lord spreads a banquet in it while his foes rage impotently without. Finally, v. 6, as the summary of the entire Psalm, really presents no further picture or metaphor, but the simple reality: David going through life under Jehovah's goodness and mercy, on to his heavenly home. — Note also the personal pronouns: I — me — my. In the previous text the subjective element had no dominating place whatever, and to put it in there would only weaken the sermon; here the subjective note is paired with the objective, and the strength of the sermon is in holding this parallel true. That means: first the Lord — he — thou (and do not forget that these are first!); then: I — me — my. And all will be as David sang it: true, real, satisfying, blessed.

1. **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.**
2. **He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.**
3. **He restoreth my soul.**

That these four lines form the first Hebrew stanza the eye will recognize more readily when they are printed like our English poetry:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul.

This stanza of four lines is followed by three others, one of six lines, and two of four lines each. Even this outward arrangement is beautiful. Delitzsch strangely indicates no stanzas, except the last one of four lines: "Surely goodness" etc. Kittel makes four stanzas, the first of six, the other three of four. But his comment shows that he did not master the first half of the Psalm sufficiently to perceive the true structure. — Too few perceive how the poet wove this cloth of gold. He uses two kinds of thread, one of golden metaphor, the other of the golden reality. "The Lord is my shepherd" (metaphor). "I shall not want" (simple reality). Then two lines about the "green pastures" and "the still waters" (again metaphor). Now the fourth: "He restoreth my soul" (simple reality again). And these four lines complete the shepherd imagery. Our division into verses should indicate that, by adding to v. 2 the clause: "He restoreth my soul," and by making v. 3 begin with: "He leadeth me in the paths" etc. For note that the shepherd leading is already described in v. 2, the third Hebrew line: "He leadeth me beside the still waters." In v. 3 we have another kind of leading, one coupled with our walking through the dark valley. Those who want to carry the shepherd idea through to include v. 4 are misled by the term "thy staff," which they suppose to be the shepherd staff, but which it is not. This "staff" differs entirely from the "rod," as we shall see presently. It is a traveller's walking stick, nothing at all like the shepherd's crook. No shepherd leads his flock in the darkness of night through dangerous mountain gorges. He gets his sheep to the fold by nightfall, as for instance the shepherds on the

night of Christ's birth, and as the parable (really it is allegory and not parable*) of the Door of the fold in John 10 clearly shows. All this evidence shows that the first stanza of the Psalm has only four lines, and that this stanza alone sets forth the Lord's shepherd care.

Only four Hebrew words form the first line of the stanza. Nor is there an "and," *v^e*, to connect the verb "I shall not want." This lack of a connective is repeated in line four: "He restoreth my soul." In both cases the figures, first "shepherd," secondly "pastures and waters," thus in a marked way are followed by the reality which interprets the figures. It is **the LORD, *Yahveh*** in his covenant relation of love, grace, mercy, and beneficence, who is here described in his kind care of David, one soul in that covenant. This unchanging covenant Lord, who abides in his love and loving care ever and ever the same, is pictured by a beautiful figure: **my shepherd**. Since David had himself been a shepherd in his youth feeding his father's flocks, and had been called from the sheepfolds and from following the ewes great with young to feed Jacob his people and Israel his inheritance, Ps. 78, 70-72, this figure of the shepherd from his lips and pen is the more expressive. Asaph followed David in Ps. 80, 1: "O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph as a flock." So also Isaiah 40, 11: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." See also Ps. 79, 13; 95, 7; 100, 3; Ez. 34, 31; Micah 7, 14; and the beautiful New Testament passages, John 10; 1 Pet. 2, 25; 5, 4; Heb. 13, 20. None has so adequately described this shepherd relation of Jehovah as Luther: "The other

* See Trench, *Parables of our Lord*, introduction p. 9, for the distinction between biblical parable and biblical allegory.

names which Scripture gives to God sound in part somewhat too glorious and majestic, and carry with them an awe and fear when we hear them pronounced, as when the Scripture calls God our Lord, King, Creator, etc. This little word 'Shepherd' is not of this kind, but sounds friendly, and brings to the godly when they read and hear it, at once assurance, comfort, and safety, like the word 'Father' and others, when they are applied to God. Now one cannot understand this comforting and lovely picture better than by going to the creature and learning from it diligently what the nature and attribute of a natural sheep, and the office, work, and care of a true shepherd are. A sheep must live completely in its shepherd's help, protection, and care; as soon as it loses him it is surrounded by all kinds of danger and must perish, for it cannot help itself in any way. The reason: it is a poor, weak, simple little animal, which can neither feed nor rule itself, nor find the right way, nor protect itself against any danger or misfortune. Not only that, but it is by nature also timid, fearsome, and straying, and if it goes aside only a little and gets lost from its shepherd, it is impossible for it to find the way back to him, yea, it runs only farther from him. Yet though it be but a weak little animal, it nevertheless has this trait, that it keeps with all diligence to its shepherd, comforts itself in his help and protection, and however and wherever he leads it, it follows, and if it can only be about him, it has no further care, is afraid of no one, feels safe and assured; for it wants nothing." — The shepherd image is rich and many-sided. David singles out one central implication: **I shall not want**, and the verb *chaser* means "to grow less," to decrease, and thus by metonymy "to want." This is no longer figure, but reality. What the figure is to convey, the statement of reality makes plain. In other words: my "shepherd," is interpreted by David as really meaning: "I

shall not want." The art of thus weaving together metaphor and reality should be recognized as biblical allegory, for nowhere else is it brought to such wonderful perfection. John 15, 1 etc. is the most perfect example of allegory in the New Testament, by Jesus himself. — The statement is negative in form, though the sense is positive enough. If there is no lack or want, then there is every supply and corresponding satisfaction. And that this truly interprets "my shepherd" is obvious, and requires no abstruse or difficult reasoning. If the great covenant Lord with all his love and care acts as my shepherd can I want anything more? If I still had one real want unattended to then in that point I would not have this shepherd. — Now it is right for the preacher to take such pithy words as these and in preaching unfold them, for they are indeed like caskets full of jewels which he is to open and then hold up one jewel after another. But in doing that let him keep within the scope and spirit of the text. Only a young seminarian may venture the sub-divisions: a) no physical wants; b) no spiritual wants, and then bring in the whole subject of daily bread as in the fourth petition.

What want David has in mind, and how it is taken care of by this Shepherd, he himself tells us: **He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.** *N'oth deshe'* are pasture lands covered with fresh, tender green. There is no need of thinking of oases in arid deserts. The point of the figure here sketched is often missed, namely when the "green pastures" are stressed as full of rich food for the sheep. It is the lying down and resting which is here emphasized; *rabatz* means "to stretch out all four" (legs). Completely filled and satisfied, all content and undisturbed, these happy sheep rest in these beautiful pastures; and there is more food for them in abundance and right at hand. This indeed is to want nothing. — **He leadeth me beside the still waters** repeats the

same idea with a figure slightly varied. A false twist stresses "the waters" as places to drink, paralleling them with the "pastures" as places for food. But the food and drink idea is merely auxiliary. A closer rendering brings out the main point: "To the waters of rest he leadeth me." Of course, just as the sheep eat in those pastures they drink of these waters and get all they want. But the point is that thus fully satisfied they lie down and rest. *Menuchah* is place of rest," *Niederlassungsstaette* (Koenig), where one may recline. There is no emphasis on the verb "he leadeth me," as some read the sentence from the English and in exposition make much of the leading. Nor should we treat the pastures and the waters as separated. The true picture is some fresh green pasture land through which a brook or river calmly flows, with trees along the course here and there. There lie the sheep in restful content. — David pictures himself as one of this resting flock. In our exposition the main question is therefore not what the "pastures" and "the waters" signify, but what is meant by this restful content. Spurgeon makes the pastures the Word of God, and the waters the influences and graces of the Spirit. But this distinction cannot be held; for compare the heavenly counterpart, Rev. 7, 17: "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." So we say the pastures and the waters belong together like food and drink on the same table, and stand for the Word of God which is both food and drink combined. But this is the auxiliary idea; the main one is that under the heavenly Shepherd the soul, nourished and refreshed by the Word, rests content, happy, satisfied. There is not even a want to disturb that rest, to say nothing of distress or danger. Augustine said that our soul is troubled until it rests in God. That is the idea here. Hunger and thirst, pain and

sorrow, etc. would destroy such rest, and therefore these are pictured as all gone. In the Revelations passage v. 16 says that in heaven hunger and thirst will be gone, and then emphasizes the same thought of rest by saying that all tears shall be wiped away, namely by removing every cause of distress. So in the Word David finds complete spiritual rest for his soul, the prelude to the heavenly rest above.

As in v. 1 we first had the figure, and then secondly the reality meant by that figure, so here v. 2 gives us a doubled figure, and hence the first clause in v. 3 presents the reality sketched by that figure: **He restoreth my soul.** *Shobeb nephesh* means to bring the soul back to itself, to revive it, *recreate*. Delitzsch gets close to the idea here expressed when he says that the Lord does this reviving of the soul when in the drought and heat of affliction and tribulation he gives us to taste powers of life, which refresh and strengthen. He should have said, in order to get David's thought exactly: by giving us these powers of life (in the Word) he gives complete spiritual rest to the soul. This restoration is to be thought of not merely as in progress and on the way, but as complete and as kept complete. David was not like a hungry sheep starting to eat, or plunging its nose in the water to slake its thirst, but like a sheep that has eaten and drunk and now lies bedded down in the shade contentedly chewing the cud. And we must stop where David did. This sheep is not a moving picture, only a single photograph. So let us not go beyond and picture this sheep as presently rising up again, once more getting hungry and thirsty, and going anew through the operation of eating and drinking. These ideas are not in the figure, however much we may incline to them and like to use them. His soul is returned, and the image he has of his soul is that of permanent rest, satisfaction, and content. And that

blessed spiritual condition the Lord has given him, leaving him not even a single want.

3. . . . **He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.**
4. **Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil:
for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff
they comfort me.**

Let us put it into English verse form as follows:

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness
For his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil.
For thou art with me
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

We prefer to read six lines with Kittel, instead of five with Delitzsch. As already stated the shepherd imagery is dropped in this stanza. There is really little that is figurative at all. **He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness** has the verb *nachah*, which denotes active leading along some road; in v. 2 the verb is the piel of *nahal*, and means bring to rest. Jehovah goes before, David follows after him — in what special relation and capacity is not stated. Nor is this needed, for the statement is general. David does not choose his own course and ways in life, he follows the Lord's direction in everything. — And this course or direction is described: **in the paths of righteousness**. *Ma'gal* is track, and the plural "paths" states that there are many of them, namely for the various relations in David's life. The Decalog points out ten of these tracks. While *tsedek* is a noun meaning "normalcy," conformity here with Jehovah's norm, and thus "righteousness," the word here, and

often elsewhere, is used as a substitute for the adjective "right" or "correct" (Koenig). These tracks are "the right paths," they agree with the Lord's norm of right. Others may follow tracks rutted by sin, contrary to the Lord's norm; not so David.— This leading the Lord does **for his name's sake**, really "in correspondence with his name." Now the Lord's **name**, a term found so frequently throughout Scripture, always denotes the revelation he has made of himself, whether that be a single word or term designating him, or statements brief or long describing him in any way whatsoever. Now this "name" or revelation of the Lord is always true, reliable, and unvarying. You cannot call him one thing to-day, and then another thing to-morrow; his name is constant. Being a revelation the "name" is intended to make the Lord known to us, and not merely in cold, general fashion, but for a saving purpose regarding us. Apply all this here: in leading David upon the right tracks in all the relations of his life the Lord follows the revelation he has given of himself for saving purposes. David is glad and happy to follow this leading of the Lord. Now, of course, if we cared to use a figure we might say the Lord like a shepherd leads his sheep, and it would be quite true. Here, however, we have the reality, and no figure whatever. In fact the figure would cramp David's thought, for the leading of a sheep is quite narrow, a leading to graze, to drink, and then back to the fold. David, however, by the expression "right tracks," as opposed to wrong tracks, means to take in all the relations of his earthly life. So let us not impose a figure where David put none, and let us reach out just as far as David did in his words.

In v. 4 *gam ki* = "if also," and is translated well **by yea, though etc.** An extreme case of the Lord's leading and David's following is introduced: **though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,**

i. e. though the Lord lead me, and I follow, through this valley. When Spurgeon stresses the "walking" as "calmly walking with God," he practices a false literalism, which inflates minor words with a peculiar holy meaning introduced from without by the commentator himself. "Walk" might here have just as well been "pass," or some other equivalent, with no stress upon it at all. The real point is that the Lord sometimes leads us down a track that looks forbidding, one that we of ourselves would never choose and that but for his accompanying presence would fill us with dismay and terror. *Ge' tsalmaveth* really means "valley of black darkness," and by folk-etymology, as Koenig puts it, *tsalmaveth* has come to mean *umbra mortis*, "death-shadow." Of course, the expression refers to actual death, but by no means to this alone. Any depressing and dreadful experiences, especially those of which the outcome is fraught with gloomy uncertainties, must here be included. We pass through many a valley of "black darkness" before the final walk through death. Usually much has been made of the word **shadow** in the English translation. Observe that Luther has only *im finstern Tal*, "in the dark valley." While *tsalmaveth* has come to mean "death-shadow," the idea conveyed is not that death is only a shadow, so that we ought to fear it no more than we fear a shadow. The idea rather is that where the shadow is, the death that casts it also is there. Instead of conveying the thought that death is as unsubstantial as a shadow, just about the opposite idea is conveyed, namely that the dread evil which is death must be where it casts its black shadow. Let us, then, abide by the true meaning and implication of *tsalmaveth*, and drop the shadow notion, that death is a mere shadow. The fact is that death is far more than an unsubstantial shadow, even for the Christian. — How necessary this correction is the sequel shows. David says: **I will fear no evil.** Now he certainly

does not mean that since death is only a shadow he really has no reason to fear, since there is no real evil threatening, only a harmless shadow. No, the **evil**, *ra'*, something harmful, a misfortune, or hurt, that might befall him, is very real, just as death itself is real. Even if we keep the original idea of "black darkness," we should remember that both "light" and "darkness" are used in the Scriptures as denoting powers. So "black darkness" is a dreadful power which threatens to overwhelm with actual evil, and will do so unless stopped by a mightier power. David is speaking of the realities, the black power, death, and the dread hurt it inflicts on defenseless men, evil. Yet he says: "I will not fear." And he says it not like a fool who deceives himself about what he is actually facing, but as a believer who knows and trusts a mighty protector. — And now please observe that all idea of "sheep" has been left behind. Poor Kittel, and all the others who like him here still hold to the idea of the shepherd leading his sheep, can offer us only impossible notions, namely that the sheep are led, "as the parting sun dips down," through some rough ravine where the shadows fall the earliest, where also there lurk wild beasts or human marauders. Then he brings in the Palestine shepherd of to-day armed with a gun or with a big club, and to make it still more realistic, a club with a knob spiked with nails. Are we really expected to picture the Lord to ourselves as such a shepherd toting a gun or a club with a spiked knob? Well, in all the territory of the Bible there is never an unworthy figure of God! Let no commentator or preacher sin against that canon. The figurative language here has nothing to do with shepherd and sheep. — **Valley** is a figure. When we meet danger, gloom, pain, sorrow, and the nearness of death, we always think of going *down*, while life, joy, blessing, etc. to our minds signify going *up*, exaltation, elevation, elation. That is all that lies in

“valley.” **Black darkness** is also a figure, especially when connected with “valley.” It is the true symbol of dread danger and death. Life is always light. What makes this darkness so terrifying to us is that we cannot see when we pass into it, and are thus absolutely helpless. That is part of the figure. But the main part will always be, when we know the Bible idea of “darkness,” that it symbolizes the spiritual powers, the devil, hell, sin and death, that war against God. So let us take these figures in their true sense and be satisfied. — David is not afraid: **for thou art with me.** Alone, he would not only have to fear, but his fear would be realized, he would perish. There would be no reason to fear only a shadow. If no more is involved, let us not be like timid children afraid of the dark. David knows there is real reason to fear, and yet he does not fear, because the Lord by his presence with him removes the cause of any legitimate fear. By his power the Lord guides, keeps, defends and protects David, so that he is safe no matter what hostile forces may come to surround him. David does not say that it is the Lord who leads him through the dark valley; still he implies as much. For if the Lord is with David as he walks on through that valley, the Lord, too, must be going that way. It is by his will that we go through the bitter and painful experiences of life and finally through temporal death. Again, David only passes through this dark valley; his goal lies beyond. The valley, however forbidding it may appear, is only a station on the way. Soon David shall reach the heights where no shadow can ever fall. — There is something unexpected in the last line of this stanza: **thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,** namely that there are two, a “rod” and a “staff,” and referred to as two by *hemmah*, “they.” Only too often in preaching these two have been treated without further thought as if there were only one. Kittel says nothing about them beyond mentioning the Palestinian

shepherd's gun and knob-spiked club. Delitzsch imagines that the single shepherd-staff is simply dualized: at one time the shepherd raises his staff high in order to lead the flock, and again he rests it on the ground and leans on it while the sheep feed about him, and this twofold action is spoken of here as referring to two rods. We see that Delitzsch still sticks to the shepherd idea in this verse. How sadly amiss this is we note at once, when we try to think of a sheep seeing the upraised staff in the black darkness, which the sheep just could not do; and how about the shepherd leaning on the staff and the sheep feeding about him, all in that valley of black darkness! Koenig thinks *shebet* and *mash'edah* denote "the entire equipment of the shepherd for defense," which sounds very vague. Stosch makes *shebet* the ruler's scepter, which in a way is quite correct; and *mash'edah* the shepherd's staff; and thus makes David trust in the King who is his Shepherd, and in the Shepherd who is his King — interesting, and in a way attractive, only the shepherd and shepherd-staff are not convincing. Spurgeon comes nearest to a solution when he calls the rod and the staff "the ensigns of the Lord's sovereignty and of his gracious care." — Yes, rod and staff are "ensigns" or symbols in the Lord's hands. In regard to **rod** the matter is quite clear when we recall the "rod of iron," also a *shebeth*, in the hands of the King's Son, with which he dashes the heathen in pieces like a potter's vessel, Ps. 2, 9. In all kinds of connections *shebet* or "rod" is used of punishment, as to chasten, break, beat, smite with the *shebet*. Parents who spare the rod spoil the child. There is the rod of wrath, the rod of oppression, the rod for the fool's back. Only very occasionally "rod" is used in a gentle sense, and then the idea is always implied that it might be used with severity. Now **staff**, *mash'edah*, is an entirely different thing. It means "a stay, or support." One girds up his loins

and takes his staff in his hand; Elisha carried such a staff on his journeys; Israel was foolish in trusting in the staff of this broken reed Egypt. — Now apply these two, rod and staff, to Jehovah. Both are figurative: once the Lord is like one with a “rod” in his hand; again he is like one with a “staff” in his hand. The rod is not the staff in this case, nor the staff the rod. Also let us not run in a second figure such as that of a king or of a shepherd, neither of which could be properly depicted as having at the same time a scepter and a walking-staff. In the vale of black darkness David is fearless, for he knows the Lord is with him. But what is there about the Lord to justify this fearlessness? His omnipotent power to smite, break, crush, break in pieces all hostile powers; that, David says, is **the rod**. But this does not exhaust the matter. There is something else about the Lord that dispels all fear from David in the vale of the black darkness. It is the wise, safe, absolutely certain guidance of the Lord. Apart from the idea of foes, in that black valley David is not bewildered as though he might stumble, get lost, miss the right path, fail to find the goal. One walks at his side whose wise and sure guidance is symbolized by a walking-staff: **thy staff**. Only now let us not spoil these two images of the Lord by foolishly trying to combine them. For instance, the Lord is both a sun and a shield, both a rock and a shadow, but in being a sun he is not a shield, and in being a shield he is not a sun, nor a rock, nor a shadow. Each figure denotes a separate and specific relation, power, or action of the Lord. So his rod, and again his staff, denote distinct relations, powers, actions. — David knows this, hence: **they comfort me**, and in this comfort all fears are extinguished. The piel of *nacham* means “to make one breathe easier.” One breathes much easier when he knows that, though unseen danger is all around him, he is fully protected and taken care of. So the Chris-

tian breathes easy even when he goes into the death-shadow. No wonder this verse is the support of thousands of sufferers and dying believers. Again the Christian breathes easy when he travels through the dark valley, where he cannot possibly see the next step because of the blackness all around. Apart from any fierce foes, alone he could not find the way. The Lord is there to guide him. All he needs to do is to keep hold of the Lord's arm. He knows the way and leads securely on until the darkness turns to light. And when the last shadow is passed, there will be the everlasting light of the heavenly heights. Yes, this is comfort—far fuller, far truer, far more effective than the usual more or less superficial interpretations, operating only with translations, are able to afford.

**5. Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of my enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.**

Thank goodness, now at last the commentators relinquish the shepherd image, although some preachers have tried to carry it through even here. We have seen first the sheep, resting, secondly the traveller fearless in the dark valley, and now thirdly we see the guest feasting in the castle. **Thou preparest a table before me**, with the verb *arak*, "to arrange in order"; *shulchan*, "a table-cloth," and thus also "a table"; *lephani*, "for my face," in my presence. A grand feast is spread. — And this, strange to say, right "in front of" (*neged*) my enemies: **in the presence of mine enemies**. This figure is especially rich in what it conveys. There is the richness of the feast or banquet; there are the hostile enemies who would like to disrupt it, but cannot. There is the security and delight of the happy guest, like a mockery to his impotent foes. And since the Lord arranges this all, we can hardly think of some private house merely, with the

doors open at the time of a feast in oriental fashion, and outsiders, here including enemies, passing in and out to view the proceedings; this must be a fortress, or a castle, with a hostile army at the gates, and no attention paid to them, counted impotent and negligible, so that instead of fighting, the lord of the castle feasts his retainers, all in perfect safety, a flagrant insult to those enemies. Remember, too, it is David the king, not David the shepherd lad, who wrote these lines on the Lord's banquet. — First, the feast in its preparation, then the feast at its height. Only two touches are needed for the picture, and the first is: **thou anointest my head with oil**. In the east perfumes are used at feasts; we of the west use the perfumes of flowers. Sometimes this *shemen*, Ger. *Salbe*, was very costly, as when Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus, and Judas started to grumble at the cost. This **oil**, perhaps we should add, evaporated cleanly, and left no spot on garments. — Now the second touch: **my cup runneth over**, the golden or silver goblet is poured full of wine to the brim, so that perhaps at times a little runs over. This line does not please our prohibitionists, especially when they note that the Lord himself pours out wine in such abundance to his guest David, a child of God. He may say, this is the inferior morality of those early days; but Jesus made gallons of wine at Cana. No; we cannot get around the simple fact, the Lord himself intended wine to gladden men's hearts. Jesus promises that even in heaven he shall drink the cup with us. — When now it comes to interpreting the figurative language of our verse we meet not a little that is fanciful and unsound. The first line depicts the banquet in preparation, the other two in full progress. That is plain. The remarkable thing is that the Lord himself is here shown as waiting upon the guest, exactly as in Luke 12, 37, where the lord girds himself, makes his servants sit down to meat, and comes forth

and serves them. Let us then not introduce servants into our Psalm, who lay the cloth, do the anointing, and fill the cup. All through the Psalm it is the Lord himself who does everything. Now where in our spiritual life do we feast at such a banquet? While David speaks only of himself, "before me," "my head," "my cup," we are surely right in thinking that this is only individualization, for at a banquet like this there would be many guests, hosts of others blessed just like David. We know of only one reality to fit this great figure, namely the public services in the Lord's house, where Word and Sacrament are lavishly dispensed. At these services all the food for the soul which the Lord has provided is set before us. We feast with delight, as of old one anointed with perfume. We feast in abundance, as one of old who drank from an overflowing cup of wine. The second line with its figure pictures richness; the third line abundance. By both the heart is delighted, so that spiritually it can desire no more. All three lines are *one* figure, each line adding just enough to make the figure complete for what it is intended to convey of the reality. — So we brush aside as an unfounded fancy Spurgeon's idea that the oil is the unction of the Holy Spirit for the Christian in his priestly office. What then is the table, and the wine goblet? He does not attempt to say. Likewise the notion that the oil denotes luxuries, the Lord not contenting himself with bare necessities; or that the oil removes corruption and bestows immortality; that the "running over" expresses surplus wealth which is intended for our poorer brethren. Let us remain sober in our exegesis.

- 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life;
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
for ever.**

This stanza deals with the future, and is devoid of figurative terms. Each of the preceding stanzas depicts what the Lord does for David at the time referred to; now all the rest of his life and even eternity are taken care of. So this stanza in most perfect fashion closes the Psalm. — Delitzsch wants *ak* read restrictively here as *nil nisi*, “nothing save” goodness etc.; Kittel likewise: *eitel Glueck*, etc. But why this special meaning? The first sense of *ak* is affirmative: **surely**, certainly, *gewiss*. — While David does not know what the future may have in store for him in the way of trials and vicissitudes, this he is certain of, judging by what the Lord does for him now, that **goodness and mercy** shall follow him always. *Tob* is the verbal adjective used as a noun. It denotes, not a divine attribute, but the sum of all the good things awaiting David, thus the Ger. *Glueck*, good fortune. — “Mercy” then should be taken in the same way: the sum of the Lord’s favors awaiting David. — Now *radaq* means “pursue,” and in this sense **follow**, as when one chases a person. Delitzsch puts it: “Like good spirits Jehovah will send out *tob* and *chesed* to overtake David’s foes and for their discomfiture to protect him against them.” Happy future, when goodness and mercy constantly chase after us, and certainly also overtake us! And this shall be **all the days of my life**, not one excepted. Shall we call it a merry chase? Rather, it is blessed. David deserved it not, that is why he put in *chesed*, beside *tob*, for the former means “favor,” and should be translated “grace” rather than “mercy.” — The idea of Delitzsch that this is one of the Psalms of the Absalom period has influenced the exegesis of the last line to a marked degree. It is made to mean that David will return to the Lord’s sanctuary for a long time. Kittel instances Anna, Luke 2, 37, who staid at the Temple night and day. This idea of returning to the Lord’s sanctuary we are told runs through all

the Psalms of this period as a kind of characteristic. But in the line: **and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever**, *l'orek yamim*, "for length of days," certainly cannot mean merely a long number of days, when in the previous line David has already mentioned "all the days of my life." We expect an advance. After speaking of his whole earthly life we expect David to say something about what will follow after, namely eternity. "Length of days" is rightly translated **for ever**. — **The house of the LORD** may indeed signify the earthly sanctuary of Jehovah, but not in a connection like this where the preceding verse has already dealt with that sanctuary. "The house of the Lord" must be an advance on the thought of the sanctuary here on earth; it must be the Lord's heavenly house. There indeed David shall dwell for ever when all the days of his earthly life are finally ended. — This leaves the verb *shabthi*, which, when all is said, is the regular 1 pers. perfect from *shub*, *reverti*. Stosch is right, as the only perfect after future tenses it has the idea of a future perfect, and thus the notion of duration: "I shall have returned to the house of *Yahveh* for ever"; for *shub b^e* is *reverti ad* or *in*. — David thus sums it all up, this life under the Lord's care, as one of his well cared for flock, as a traveller under his care even in greatest danger, and as a guest of his in his banquet chamber — all that finally means that he shall have returned to the Lord's own house, namely heaven, to abide there for ever.

SUGGESTIONS

It is discouraging to find one preacher after another falling for the theme: "The Lord is my Shepherd," as if this covered the Psalm. One can almost guess the parts: "He feeds — leads — protects," with only slight variation. Occasionally the theme is lengthened: "The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall

not want." And then we get, using one of the best examples, this negative lay-out: "Neither refreshing pastures — nor the right paths — nor the safe fold." There is an evident reason why so many preachers advance no further in preaching on this Psalm, and that reason is, they have not given it close exegetical study, most of them not even having looked at the original. Because homiletically this is no less than a capital crime, so much is made of it here. To make the theme, "The Lord is my shepherd," cover this Psalm, the whole imagery from v. 3 on has to be recast by the preacher — actually, he rewrites the whole Psalm according to this shepherd notion of it. What presumption! and because the thing is done as if it were the right thing to do, what ignorant presumption! No; I for one prefer the inspired king's product to the uninspired efforts of ill-informed preachers. Nor should any of the helps on this Psalm keep reproducing these "shepherd" outlines, and leave the impression, because so many have used them therefore they are perfectly in order. When men otherwise of homiletical standing follow this beaten track, it only shows that we must watch even them. — Thank goodness, a few have shown better judgment. There is B. Hoffmann: *The Three Pictures by which the Psalm Reveals the Lord*: I. That of the Good Shepherd; II. That of the opulent host; III. That of the blessing priest. It is nothing much in the way of an outline, especially in part three, yet it is on the right track. — *The Lord's Care* (too broad): I. For the sheep of his pasture; II. For the traveller in his company; III. For the guest at his side (better: at his table; or: in his house). — *Who Best Gets through this World?* I. The member in God's flock; II. The guest at God's table; III. The child in God's house.

Then there is the faulty way of superimposing ideas upon the Psalm, instead of allowing it to unfold itself and moving in its inspired imagery. It is as if the Psalm were not already clothed in the richest of fabrics, the preacher must sew onto it in his sermon such tatters as his rag-bag is able to furnish. Here are samples: "The Lord as Shepherd: He leads 1) the soul that believes in him; 2) the church that knows him; 3) the nations that he calls." And yet the entire Psalm is subjective: I — me — mine or my; not a word in it about the church, and still less about nations. — "Learn to Believe in thy divine Shepherd: I. Learn to understand him; II. Learn to love him; III. Learn to trust him" — which is to superimpose a very ordinary psychological category upon the Psalm, and to cast aside all its lovely inspired imagery. Let us

get away from these things worse than inferiorities, though printed in expensive books!

After Easter and its octave have presented to us the *objective* fact of Christ's resurrection to kindle and satisfy faith, we need a text strongly *subjective*: your soul, my soul is to apprehend and enjoy personally our Lord Jesus whom God brought again from the dead as that great Shepherd of the sheep, Heb. 13, 20. This passage from Hebrews shows how the Easter idea of Christ's resurrection is biblically connected with our Psalm. While it makes this connection only with the Shepherd, we feel at once that the other images are true of our Lord likewise only because he has risen from the dead. Hold, then, to these two points: 1) The Easter idea pervading the Psalm; 2) the subjective and personal character of the Psalm.

Now you may string the pearls, or let us say the different jewels, of this Psalm together analytically: 1) the sheep resting in perfect peace; 2) the traveller on the right road and safe even in danger; 3) the banquet-guest feasting in undisturbed joy; 4) the life led by goodness and mercy up into the Lord's house. File these parts down to the best form you are able to give them, and summarize them under a theme, and your sermon is done. The substance of the theme will be something like this: David pictures your soul and mine amid the blessings of our risen Lord. In an analytical outline hardly any deviation is possible from this lay-out. One may content himself with three portraits of the soul instead of using four. For the banquet-hall is the Church on earth, where goodness and mercy are ours as long as we live, from which finally we pass into the Lord's house above. Or one may split into five, dividing the second image into two: 1) led on the paths of righteousness; 2) protected in the dark valley. — Most preachers will be captivated and held by the pictures which David used. And who can say a thing against that? But back of these pictures lie the realities — remember what was said on the nature of biblical allegory. These realities are: 1) restoration, 3 a; 2) righteousness, 3 b; 3) comfort, v. 4; 4) goodness and mercy, 6 a; 5) the house of the Lord.^{4, 5} Points two and three may be considered as one, thus leaving four altogether, the first two subjective *in* us, the last two objective *for* us. Combining thus the first two, and the last two, the whole sermon may show only two main parts, each with two sub-parts. Here again the office of the theme should be to summarize the whole.

The Risen Lord and Your Soul.

King David sees it, like his own soul:

I. Restored; II. Comforted; III. Followed by goodness and mercy; IV. In the Lord's house at last.

— Another analysis sets in order the things said about the Lord, who is made so prominent all through the Psalm after being given the shepherd title in the very start. The writer has not found adequate regular titles which would coordinate with "Shepherd," though it would be pleasing if this could be done. But there are these different activities of the Lord, embodied in the verbs of which he is the subject: 1) he makes me lie down and rest, i. e., restores my soul; 2) he leads me on right paths, and his rod and staff (almighty power and gracious support) comfort me; 3) he prepares a table before me, and makes goodness and mercy follow me; 4) he makes me dwell in his house for ever. The fourth point is not from a verb mentioning what the Lord does, but attributes to him what the soul finally attains.

Happy the Soul under the Care of the Risen Lord!

So was King David's soul. The Lord has these benefactions for your soul:

- I. He gives you rest.*
- II. He works in you restoration.*
- III. He bestows on you guidance.*
- IV. He fills you with comfort and assurance.*
- V. He sets a feast before you.*
- VI. He makes goodness and mercy follow you.*
- VII. He takes you to his own home in heaven.*

Most of the Psalms refuse to submit to logical analysis, but the Twenty-third is an exception, it admits of scarcely any inner synthesis at all. Such examples of outward synthesis as we have met impose nothing but unrelated ideas upon the general thought of the text, and ought therefore to find no response among our preachers. — One may, however, synthesize by following vertically down through the text some of its vital elements, and then grouping these together to constitute a whole. There is first the soul and its needs. These needs lie back of all the statements telling us what is done for the soul. Gather and group these needs. Secondly, there is the Lord. He is, of course, the risen Savior, but all through the Psalm, from

what he does we can conclude who and what he himself is. Group this material in proper order. Thirdly, and the Psalm offers this directly, there is the grace and help which this Lord provides for the soul. Let us use a word from the text itself as the theme to combine this synthetic material:

King David's Blessed Word: "I Shall Not Want."

I. The want; II. The Lord in his grace; III. The rich provision; IV. The joy of satisfaction.

JUBILATE

Is. 40, 26-31

The first triad of the second half of Isaiah, chapters 40-48, presents Israel's deliverance from Babylon. The first sub-triad in this section, chapters 40-42, presents the glory of the Lords' power as the guarantee for Israel's deliverance. Our text is from chapter 40, promising the Lord's coming in his incomparable power. There are two sections in the chapter: first, v. 1-11 proclaiming the Lord's coming to deliver his distressed people; and secondly, v. 12-31 proclaiming his incomparable power and wisdom. There are three divisions in this second section, separated by the refrain, v. 18 and v. 25: "To whom then will ye liken God (me)? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" (v. 25 slightly different). V. 12-18 shows the Lord incomparably greater than the mind of man; v. 19-25, exalted above all that is called god on earth; and v. 26-31, which is our text, draws the conclusion: this power of God is the sure guarantee for the preservation and renewal of his people. Why then doubt any longer, why not believe, grow strong in that power, and jubilate? — The argument in the entire section, v. 12-31, is simply this: the God of infinite might and wisdom cannot fail when he sets out to deliver his people. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." — Now this beautiful text is set for one of the after-Easter Sundays. Jubilate is paired with Cantate. In the former the objective fact of God's power is stressed; in the latter the subjective praise and glorification of God is voiced. This is how the two match each other. Here we have in a new way what the three preceding texts presented,

namely Easter and its octave the objective fact, and Mis. Domini the subjective or personal blessings. In the resurrection of Christ from the dead the incomparable power of God manifests itself, and that for our salvation and deliverance. By all means read Eph. 1, 19-23, especially v. 19-20, for the idea here conveyed. This power of God lies before us in his work of creation. There we can actually see it. Now our text itself does not tell us how this power wrought in raising Christ from the dead. It jumps at once to the blessed saving effect produced in us: "He giveth power to the faint," etc. Yet we know that the faint and those of no might are not made strong in spirit by a direct act of God's omnipotence. There is a Mediator, Christ crucified and risen; and there are means, Word and Sacrament. The present Sunday, lit with Easter light, makes us think especially of the divine Mediator, in whom God's power wrought so wondrously for our salvation. We supply this link between the great power of God on the one hand, and the spiritual renewal and strength wrought in us on the other hand. *God, whose power raised Christ from the dead, fills us with spiritual strength through him.*

**26. Lift up your eyes on high,
and behold, who hath created these things,
that bringeth out their host by number:
he calleth them all by names
by the greatness of his might, for that
he is strong in power;
not one faileth.**

God is greater than the mind of man, v. 12-18; greater than anything called god on earth, v. 19-25. Now our text makes the application of this tremendous reality for Israel. In doing so the prophet, or the voice represented by the prophet as speaking to Israel, once more briefly, yet effectively, brings out the incomparable greatness of the Lord, from which then the

deductions are drawn for Israel. It is the power and wisdom of God as revealed in the starry host of heaven, that is now used. Dramatically Israel is called upon to look at the star-studded sky at night: **Lift up your eyes on high.** The verb itself, *s'u*, means "to lift up"; and *marom*, an accusative of direction, signifies "height," or specialized *Himmelshoeh*, "heaven's height," here the starry expanse. — The next verb *r'u*, **behold**, has no object, and thus sounds like an exclamation. Some look, and perceive nothing; Israel is to see or perceive. — Instead of putting down some object that Israel is to behold, a question is inserted directing the mind to that object: **Who hath created these?** i. e. the stars shining in countless numbers in the sky. Our version loses this question. Observe the verb *bara'*, which in the kal always denotes "create" in the full sense of the term, i. e. to call into existence out of nothing. For an Israelite this question is not one on *quis*, but on *qualis*. This is: What kind of being is the creator of these heavenly hosts? The idea is that this Being is himself invisible. But here are his wonderful works. They declare the kind of God he is. — A. Pfeiffer reads the next two clauses also as questions: "Does he bring out their host by number?" i. e. so that he has to count them as they come out. "Does he count them all by names?" i. e. as one calls the roll to see that all are present. According to A. Pfeiffer the implied answer is no, he does not need to. And the reason is: "Because of strength and power (inherent in them) not one is absent." But this reading does not convince. It ignores the construction. And the two questions do not imply a negative answer, as is assumed. If we are asked, for instance: "Does he bring out their host by number?" i. e. counting them all, we might answer yes just as well as no; for to count them all, this host which no man on earth can possibly count, is certainly a mark of divinity. So also the second question. —

It is the construction which rules out questions. There is first a participle, *hammotsi*, from *yatsa'*, **that bringeth out**; Koenig: "make the stars rise"; then there is the finite verb *yiqra'*, from *qara'* with *l'* "to name some one," **he calleth them all**, *l'kullam (kol)*, **by name**. This participle and verb following (as in all such cases, and whether with *v'* or without) really should be rendered: "while, or as often as, he bringeth out their host by number, he calleth them all by names." It is what the grammar has termed the *casus pendens* construction. The thought itself is cumulative. On top of numbering a host which for us is absolutely numberless, God even calls each individual in this host by a specific **name**. And we may add that this name is not a mere verbal designation such as we give to some star, but a designation which exactly fits that star, expresses God's intent in regard to it, and could be borne by no other star in all that numberless host. — This fact, overwhelming to our minds when we contemplate it, is followed by a word of explanation: **by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power**. The *min* in *merob* is causal: "because of," due to. The plural *'onim*, from *on*, intensifies the idea of "might." There is no suffix to indicate that this "might" is "his," i. e. God's, just as there is none in *koach*, "power," *Ammitz* is "keen," firm or strong. The whole phrase is distinctively Hebrew: "in consequence of the multitude of (his) ability and strong in regard to power" (*koach* accusative of relation). — The result is now briefly added: **not one faileth**, *'ish* = any one, and with the negative: not one, or not a single one. The niphal *ne'dar*, see *'adar*, means "remain behind," be missing. Every night God leads out on the vast expanse of the heavens the numberless starry host, *ts'ba'am*, from *tsaba'*, a multitude in orderly arrangement, each star with its own individual name; and this he does because of his infinite power and might, so that there is

never a night when even one single star is missing. You and I would not miss one, if one should not be in its place to-night; God would miss it at once, and would call out its name. A mighty simple way, and yet one perfectly effective for its purpose, which is to bring to our minds and hearts some adequate realization of the power and mind of God, the Creator and Preserver. He is wholly invisible, but the heavens declare his glory and the firmament shows his handiwork. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse," "they," the Gentiles, to say nothing of Israel, God's chosen nation.

Here we must quote Aug. Pieper: "The Lord is conceived as a shepherd who nightly leads the vast number of stars like a flock of sheep from their fold to the pasture, and this in perfect order, who calls each by name to its place; and of the whole great number not a single one is missing. All this is ascribed to the infinity of his *ability* and to the effective strength of his power. But the expressions are so put that at the same time the wisdom, the understanding of God shines forth from the description. The endless host is counted exactly. He knows each individual. The words preach at the same time *the faithful care* of God; already the image of the Shepherd and his flock does this, but likewise the details. The counting is not a mere intellectual operation. He calls them all by name. To each one he has given that name. He knows the individual, John 10, 14, and *is concerned* about each in particular; he *sees to it* that none remains behind. This is the faithful heart of God, who in his infinite might and wisdom did not only by his Word call into existence a number of individual creatures far beyond all powers of human comprehension, but also in his goodness and faith-

fulness cares for each single one, not one, not even the tiniest speck of dust excepted. . . . Our passage is to teach the godly but almost despairing little flock of believers languishing in exile, that the same God, who displays every night his might, wisdom, and care in the countless starry host, surely is wise, strong, and faithful enough to lead his godly people whom he has chosen and created for himself out of the Babylonian dungeon back to its home, and that in doing so not a single individual shall be forgotten. Our passage has found many an echo in Christian poetry and in preaching. In every Christian school and in every Christian house Wilhelm Hey's precious pearl is sung: '*Weist du wie viel Sternlein stehen,*' and drops balm into many a wounded breast. Nothing is more necessary for pious children of God in their sin-misery and thousandfold crosses on earth than this comfort, that even each single and smallest thing in our lives is under the wise, faithful, almighty care of God. Even the hairs of our heads are numbered, Matth. 10, 30. The pastor who does not preach this part of the Gospel properly is remiss in a great point." Note: the hairs are not merely counted, but each, like the stars, has its individual number.

**27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob,
and speakest, O Israel,
My way is hid from the LORD,
and my judgment is passed over from my
God?**

**28. Hast thou not known? hast thou not
heard;
that the everlasting God, the LORD, the
Creator of the ends of the earth,
fainteth not, neither is weary?
there is no searching of his understanding.**

The application of v. 26 is brought home to Israel by these questions which imply their own an-

swers. *Lammah*, **why**, has the sense: "by what right" sayest thou? The two imperfects *tho'mar* and *th'dabber*, **sayest**, and **speakest thou**, denote duration, a speaking that is kept up. The piel *dibber* is itself iterative and thus stronger than 'amar, as Aug. Pieper reminds us, adding that in the Yiddish "dibbern" means to babble. The disheartened exiles have no real right to keep talking as they do. In these questions there lies reproof and correction. **Jacob** and **Israel** both have the note of divine endearment, for Jacob was chosen instead of Esau, and Israel was so named of God himself when the bearer of this new name had been spiritually made over. In both names lies the thought: How can a people rightly bearing these names speak as these exiles keep on doing?—Their unwarranted complaint is now quoted: **My way is hid from the LORD**. By *derek* here is meant "my lot," what happens to me. The verb *nisth^erah*, from *sathar*, is forward for emphasis, in opposition to the thought of v. 26, that nothing escapes from the Lord. There *does escape*, these people say, their way. With *Yaveh* we always have *me*, not *min*, because 'Adonay is to be read, and it begins with a guttural.—A parallel statement rounds out the complaint: **and my judgment is passed over from my God**, in the Hebrew: "from my God my judgment is passed over." The subjects and predicates of the two lines in v. 27 are thus chiasmatically arranged. *Mishphati* Koenig rightly translates *mein Rechtsanspruch*, "my legal claim," that which I rightly claim. Nor can there be doubt as to what this claim embodies, namely that by right the Lord who had chosen Israel and given to Israel great promises should now crush Israel's enemies, lift up and exalt Israel as was her due. God's promises were Israel's claim; and this was legal as a matter of right, which God himself in his court would not dare to refuse. That is why the possessive **my God**

is used, which always means: 'Elohim, whose great power and might are exerted in my favor. Yet, strange to say, this God, so bound by legal claims upon him, passes these claims over, *ya'abor*, ignores them. That is Israel's unwarranted complaint. For how could he do such a thing, ignore the rights he himself graciously granted Israel, he who keeps his eye on every one of the starry hosts and sees to it that night after night not a single one is missing?

V. 27 implies that there is no real reason or ground for Israel's complaint, only a fancied ground on Israel's part drawn from outward appearances by which unbelieving Israel deceives its own self, drawing false deductions. V. 28 strengthens v. 27, by implying in its double question that really Israel ought to know better. — **Hast thou not known?** with the verb *yada'*, in the sense of "realize," says that Israel should have realized. — The added question: **hast thou not heard?** indicates how Israel should have known: the thing was preached to Israel again and again, it had the Lord's own sure and certain Word. — Now follows the sum and substance of that preaching in an object clause. Our English version is correct in making 'Elohe 'olam the subject, and not *Yahveh*, as the commentators generally do: **that the everlasting God, etc.** The eternal God is one who in his power and might never changes. Yet Israel is presuming that he has changed by growing weary and faint in his care of his people. *Yahveh* is an apposition: this eternal God is Israel's covenant LORD, whose gracious covenant promises were sealed to Israel. — Our version reads the further apposition: **the Creator of the ends of the earth;** but this should be a relative clause, since there is no article before the participle *bore'* (from *bara'*): "who is the Creator" etc. As the Creator the Lord is omnipotent, i. e. in his creative act, calling the universe into existence out of nothing, he has demonstrated his omnipotence

beyond the shadow of a doubt. **The ends of the earth, qatsoth**, "bounds" or boundaries, are mentioned to include by metonymy all that is embraced in these boundaries, so that the expression is the equivalent of "the whole earth." Of course, this included also Babylon, the land of Israel's exile. — Now follow the predicates for the subject "the everlasting God": **he fainteth not, neither is he weary** — does not Israel know, has it not heard that? There is a difference between the synonyms *yyi'aph* (*ya'eph*) and *yyigga'* (*yaga'*): "to faint" is to show a decline of strength as from lack of nourishment; "to be weary" is to show such decline from exhaustion in labor and effort. Neither are possible with God. He is eternal, absolutely unchanging; hence in him no sagging or lagging of strength is possible from such a thing as hunger and thirst. Then as the Creator he is omnipotent; hence no effort or exertion ever exhaust his strength. — The thought thus far is negative. Israel's complaint should never have been made, for Israel knows that God lacks nothing in strength. That leaves the question: if his power never wanes, why then has he left his people to languish? The negative covered only the half of the necessary answer, the positive is now added to cover the other half: there is **no searching of his understanding**. *'Ayin*, construct *'en*, is originally a noun meaning "non-existence," and was then used as a negative copula: "is not." We may say: there is no such thing on our part as a searching out, comprehending, or grasping the Lord's *th^ebunah*, "*insight*." Our minds are held by the surface of things; we judge so largely by appearances. Even when we penetrate beneath the surface, it is only partially, we fail to get to the bottom, and to do this in all directions. But the Lord's wisdom is absolute. He never acts on partial knowledge, never makes a mistake that needs correction. Israel should know that. A proper reali-

zation of it would hush any complaint on its part. He who knows all about everything may delay his help as we reckon delay, or may not help in the way we think he should or might, but in the end his wisdom is always vindicated, and we appear as foolish with our thoughts and complaints.

29. **He giveth power to the faint;**
and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.
30. **Even the youths shall faint and be weary,**
and the young men shall utterly fall.
31. **But they that wait upon the LORD shall**
renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings as eagles;
they shall run, and not be weary;
and they shall walk, and not faint.

He who has heard God's Word aright has come to realize that God, so far from fainting or becoming weary, is the one never-failing and inexhaustible source of strength for those that believing wait on him. Note the force of the participle *nothen*, from *nathan*, **he giveth**, every time the case occurs; he is ever so minded, it is his fixed habit. He giveth to **the faint power**, *layya'eph* recalling *yiy'aph* in v. 28, and *koach* the same term from v. 26. — The parallel line is not a mere repetition or just an explanation, but an advance in thought. "The faint" are they who had strength but lost it, perhaps from lack of food. But **they that have no might** (*'onim* as in v. 26) are they who never had any, Luther: *den Unvermoegenden*. To these **he increaseth strength**; and *rabah* is related to *rob*, multitude — he bestows a plentitude, an abundance of strength. Let us put in place of a fainting and weary God, a God who is the fountain of might and power for all the faint and strengthless. This is a true conception from revelation. — Both

statements in this verse are general and carry no limitation, as v. 31 shows in the expression: "they that wait upon the Lord." For it is always faith, and faith alone, which uses the Lord as the fount of strength when we faint and lose our strength or when we find ourselves strengthless to begin with.

V. 30-31 is a single sentence: "though," *v^e*, v. 30 . . . "yet," *v^e*, v. 31; or: "even if . . . nevertheless." The synonyms *n^e'arim*, **youths**, and *bachurim*, **young men**, differ only in that the former is used often of lads, the latter of young warriors, thus a stronger term. Youth is full of vitality and strength, beyond any other period in life. And yet it may happen that youths **shall faint**, the verb *ya'aph* as twice before; all their strength may wither and fade. So also "the young men" selected as warriors for their physical prowess; it may happen that they shall **utterly fall**. *Kashal* means "totter," and the infinitive absolute added to the finite verb, *kashoe yikkashelu*, intensifies the action: "utterly totter," as when struck down by a hostile weapon. We all know from experience youth thus often fades or is struck down. The latter is especially true of soldiers in battle. — But with God's children this is different. They are named here **they that wait upon the LORD**. *Qove* is the participle kal, plural, construct from *qoveh*, from the verb *qavah*, "to wait," Luther *harren*; and *Yahveh* is the appended genitive; hence: "the Lord's waiting ones." Aug. Pieper finely explains this verb "wait": it is a synonym of *batach*, "to trust," "to believe," only it is stronger, namely to hold fast your trust *unwaveringly, finaliter credere*. — Now they who thus hold out in faith **shall renew their strength**; Luther: *sie kriegen neue Kraft*. The hiphil of the verb *chalaph* means "to exchange," *substituere*, to put something different in place of something (Koenig). Hence here this renewal is not a new supply of strength for the old supply that has faded out, but strength traded

in or exchanged for the faith and the steady waiting. By our waiting on the Lord we, as it were, get in exchange from him strength. Only now we must not cling to the physical and material ideas of strength, as though every sick person simply by waiting in trust on the Lord will become well and strong, and every one dying from exhaustion, hunger, wounds, etc. simply by strenuous believing will receive new physical vitality and life. There is no such promise here. The expression "they that wait on the Lord" points us to the spiritual strength that is here promised. The Lord indeed often renews also our physical strength, gives back health, and grants new life. But this is not the subject here treated. No matter what your physical condition, whether you are old or young, sick or well, full of life or dying, well-fed or starving to death, happy and prosperous or wrecked in happiness and health, ever and ever in the Lord you shall receive in exchange for your persevering trust spiritual strength, *koach*, the same word as in v. 26 and 29. — What is meant by this strength is stated by three simple clauses which are arranged in the form of an anti-climax: **mount up — run — walk**. Like St. Paul they that wait on the Lord shall be able in victory and triumph to finish their course and reach the crown laid up for them. This is what it means to have strength. Temptations, trials, afflictions, crosses, persecutions — they shall overcome them all. Note, for instance, in the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor, in Revelations, the recurring phrase: "He that overcometh," etc. **They shall mount up with wings as eagles** follows Luther's translation who read *ya'alu* as the imperfect *kal*, and *'eber* as an adverbial accusative. It is simpler to read the verb as *hiphil*, and the noun as its object: "they shall raise the wing," i. e. for flight. Koenig, however, modifies the meaning of the *hiphil* of *'alah* in our passage considerably, namely from "make rise up" to "make

to grow." But this disrupts the thought. Instead of flying, running, and walking, all allied, we would have: making the pinion feathers grow, running, and walking. The note of strength in exercise, however, lies not in this lifting of the wing merely, but in lifting it **as eagles**, who in their lofty and sustained flight are the symbol of strength and tirelessness. — **They shall run, and not be weary** cannot be made to mean that as eagles they shall rise in unwearied flight. This line drops the figure of the eagles, and uses that of the runner in some race striving for the goal, who rushes forward unimpeded and unchecked, with unflagging strength. *Ruts* is "to run with speed, and *yaga'* is "to tire," to become exhausted. He who sets us upon our course will not let us sink down spent and winded, but will give us strength to finish that course. — The final line has: **they shall walk**, in a way a necessary addition, since the life of those who wait on the Lord is not always full of swift movement, sometimes it seems slow, like walking instead of running. But though the way seems long, they shall **not faint**, with the verb *ya'aph*, *sich abhasten*, like one who walks too fast and cannot go on any more. Their strength holds out till the last step is taken and the pilgrim reaches his eternal home.

This is the kind of God and Lord we have. He himself has infinite power and uses that power in wisdom. And when by enduring faith we cling to him he fills us with strength so that we can fly, run, and walk, and never weary, till we reach our glorious goal. The last verses of the text are a sure promise, a mighty encouragement for our faith, and the fulfillment of that promise has never failed. Adding the Easter connection we may say that he who raised up Christ from the dead for our salvation, works likewise in us and that through the risen Christ, supplying us with all the strength we may need for our life in faith and godliness. Eph. 1, 18 and 19: "that ye may know

. . . what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe.”

SUGGESTIONS

A. Pfeiffer's observation is to the point, when he urges the preacher to study some of the hymns which have their inspiration in our text. There are a number of them in German, such as: *Weist du, wie viel Sternlein stehen*, etc.; *Kommt Kinder, wischt die Augen aus*, etc.; *Himmelan, nur Himmelan*, etc., and others. One wishes that we had similar hymns in English, but these are yet to be written. — The subject of the text is the Lord's never failing power making those who wait on him spiritually strong. In Israel we meet the voice of discouragement and unbelief. There is an effective refutation of all such unbelief, and a triumphant emphasis on the assured promise of strength for preserving faith. This is the inner substance of the text. For Jubilate the preacher will naturally add a reminiscence of the Easter note, since the risen Christ is himself a display of the Lord's power working in our behalf, and the medium for making us strong to run the way heavenward to eternal salvation.

Yet the outlines offered on this text by various homiletical writers afford no rich selection. Only two are worthy at all to be introduced here. First that by Sheerer:

Jubilate!

- I. *Holy is the Lord our God in his ways*, v. 25.
- II. *Almighty is the Lord our God in his works*, v. 26-28.
- III. *Rich is the Lord our God in his gifts of grace*, v. 29-31.

Yet this outline will prove difficult in its elaboration especially of the first part. And the three parts are not bound closely enough together, having a tendency, when elaborated, to fall apart. — Deichert offers:

As Our Lord and Master Prepares for His Ascent, so the Disciples Should Prepare to Follow Him.

- I. *With a longing look upward at the glory of God*, v. 26-29.

- II. *With a clear look about us at the emptiness of the world, v. 30.*
- III. *With a joyful uplift of faith to the bright heights of grace, v. 31.*

There is no color in the outline from the phraseology used in the text. The theme is adapted to Ascension Day far better than to Jubilate. And the arrangement of the parts puts the world's emptiness in the central place where it certainly does not belong, and puts it between the glory of God and the bright heights of grace. These two outlines may serve as correctives to the preacher, hardly as examples to follow.

The text itself offers us several themes. One of these, surely, is:

"He Giveth Power to the Faint. For

I. He himself fainteth not.

Look at the star-studded sky night after night, and recall in the domain of grace the resurrection of Christ by the power of God.

II. Neither shall they faint who wait on him.

Mere natural strength is bound to faint, v. 30. Unbelief cuts itself off from the one fountain of strength, v. 26-27. Faith's waiting clings to the promise, and the risen Christ is the climax of that promise. Thus faith rises like the eagle, runs like the racer, walks unwearied, and reaches its heavenly goal.

Other themes are: "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength"; "Mounting up with wings as eagles." Then, too, one may follow the cue of the text in v. 26, where we are pointed to the stars:

The Silent Voice of the Starry Host.

Night after night in majestic silence that voice speaks to us of

- I. The God who leads them out.*
- II. The folly which doubts his power.*
- III. The vanity of human strength.*
- IV. The certainty of God's promises.*
- V. The blessedness of those who wait on the Lord.*

The Stars and the Word.

What the stars silently show, the Word fully proclaims.

- I. *They direct the faint to the power of God.*
"Lift up your eyes on high," v. 26.
"Hast thou not heard?" v. 28.
- II. *They call from unbelief to faith.*
"Why sayest thou?" v. 27.
"But they that wait on the Lord," v. 31.

CANTATE

Psalm 98

The versicle for this Sunday is taken from our Psalm: "O sing unto the Lord a new song: for he hath done marvelous things. . . . The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen," v. 1-2. This Psalm is *a call to praise the Lord's salvation, righteousness, and judgment*, and naturally comes with special effectiveness when we think of the great deed the Lord performed on Easter, where this salvation, righteousness, and judgment shine out in all their glory. — The best explanation why this Psalm is the only one with just the title: "A Psalm," is that it is the lyrical companion of the previous Psalm. The 97th is prophetic, the 98th the lyric for that grand prophecy. Thus ours is the Psalm in a Psalm, hence its simple title: a song of praise for the great event recounted in the preceding song. Looking at the first line of Ps. 97: "The Lord reigneth," and then at our Psalm as the lyrical expression for that fact, seen prophetically, we may well second Spurgeon in calling ours the Coronation Psalm. — It has three stanzas: v. 1-3 recount summarily the royal acts of the Lord, for which a new song should be sung in his praise; v. 4-6 call up the grand chorus and instruments which are to produce that song; v. 7-9 summarize the effect of the Lord's reign. Or 1) the royal reign calling forth the new song; 2) the fitting music ushering in that reign; 3) the joyful expectation arising from that reign. Hence also the verb forms used, first prophetic perfects (which view what will be, prophetically, as having already come to pass); secondly, imperative; thirdly, future tenses (imperfects).

1. **O sing unto the LORD a new song;
for he hath done marvelous things:
his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.**
2. **The LORD hath made known his salvation:
his righteousness hath he openly showed in
the sight of the heathen.**
3. **He hath remembered his mercy and his
truth toward the house of Israel:
All the ends of the earth have seen the sal-
vation of our God.**

The call to sing unto Yahveh a **new song** is found in several Psalms. The newness desired is one that fits and matches the new deeds or manifestations of **the LORD** in his grace, might, etc. Such a call to sing a new song (sometimes it is a resolution: "I will sing") always voices the faith and the overflowing joy of the Psalmist himself, and on the part of those whom he addresses this call counts on a ready and joyful response. — In our Psalm the reason for this call is at once stated: **for he hath done marvelous things**, *niphla'oth*, participle niph'al from *phala'*, wonderful or extraordinary things. *Phela'* is miracle. The participle differs from the noun in that the participle expresses a judgment. It is as if the Psalmist viewed the deeds of the Lord and then recognizing their stupendous greatness called them miraculous. **Marvelous things**, in the sense of miraculous acts, are such as transcend all human power and comprehension. They are deeds that at the same time display the glory, grace, goodness, and truth of the Lord. Moreover they are wrought wholly in the interest of his kingdom. The verb "he hath done" is the prophetic perfect, viewing these future acts of the Lord as already accomplished. — A second line characterizes these "marvelous things" in a brief de-

scriptive way: **his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory**, the Hebrew, however, has the verb forward, *hoshi'ah*, the hiphil from *yasha'*, here with the dative: "There have helped him his right hand," etc. Not, of course, that the Lord ever needs help, outside help. For **his right hand** is the Lord's own omnipotent power, so frequently designated thus in the Scriptures. This means, for one thing, that no one else obtained the victory for him. Yet more than mere power lies in the expression "his right hand," for the right hand also stands for honor and majesty. Thus by his power the Lord vindicated the honor of his name. The whole sentence also implies that there were many powerful enemies warring against the Lord, and attempting to shame the honor of his name. Against all of them he prevailed; they all failed and fell before him. — But the Psalmist adds **his holy arm**. This translation reads the Hebrew genitive: "the arm of his holiness," as qualitative, and thus in general equal to the adjective "holy," although the noun is stronger than the adjective. In only one other place, namely Is. 52, 10, is this expression used, although we have the analagous "arm of his glory," translated: "his glorious arm," Is. 63, 12. The English "his holy arm" really fails to convey the idea of the original, which does not mean to characterize "the arm," or power, of the Lord as holy, but says that his power ("arm") maintains his *qodesh* or holiness, implying that there have been forces which tried to profane this holiness, so that the Lord should no longer be separate from sin. But these forces failed and succumbed. Spurgeon has the right idea: "Sin, death, and hell fell beneath his solitary prowess, and the idols and the errors of mankind have been overthrown and smitten by his hand alone." Still he blurs the thought of power that lies in "his right hand" and "arm" by calling it "a moral power." Spurgeon is thinking of the spiritual vic-

tories among men produced by the Gospel. Yet he himself mentioned sin, death, and hell, and he might have added the devil, all of whom are not conquered by the moral power of the Gospel. It required the Son of God himself dying on the cross and raised from the dead, in other words a divine, infinite, omnipotent Redeemer to gain the victory of our salvation. There are those who think the Psalmist is prophetically speaking about the Babylonian exile. They are making the interpretation far too narrow. Every time the Lord rescues his people and works salvation it is the might of his right hand and of the arm of his holiness; and the climax of these victories is the deliverance wrought in Christ Jesus. So this Psalm properly fits the Easter season, fits it even in a special way.

In v. 2 the victory which the Lord achieved is broadcasted. **The LORD hath made known his salvation**, with the emphasis on "hath made known," the verb heading the sentence. It is "his salvation," wholly his, since his hand and arm wrought it. Yet it is not intended by him for his benefit, but for the benefit of men. It is **the LORD**, the changeless covenant God, who prepared this **salvation**, deliverance, rescue, with all that connects with it in the way of safe condition and endless blessings. So this "salvation" must be conveyed to us. Hence he **hath made known**, what he hath prepared for us, *hodi'a*, the hiphil from *yada'*: "he hath made (men) to realize, or experience, his salvation." This first line says nothing about the persons to whom the Lord made his salvation known, so that they actually perceived and realized it. The revelation only as such is emphasized. Of course, this is by means of his Word.— Now the second line emphasizes the very thing that the first line omitted: **his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen**. But the word "heathen" is first in the Hebrew: "to the eyes

of the heathen hath he uncovered" etc. This signifies world-wide revelation. Now it is true that some of the Lord's dealings with Israel, both in chastising and in delivering his people, became widely known in the world; yet the full fact expressed in this line about "the heathen," *goyim*, or "nations," occurred when after Christ's resurrection the Gospel was carried into all the world and preached to all nations. — While this second line emphasizes the recipients of the Lord's revelation, it repeats the substance of that revelation: **his righteousness**. These two, "his salvation" and "his righteousness," are often paired in the Psalms, and are evidently two sides of one and the same thing. When A. Pfeiffer says that dogmatics fails us altogether in our passage in interpreting the term "righteousness" as an attribute of God, he must have misread his dogmatics badly, for the Lutheran dogmaticians describe this divine attribute as always active, according to the Scriptures, in *opera ad extra*, i. e. in acts of righteousness or righteous dealings. This fully applies here. Among the marvelous things which the Lord has done are his saving acts in which he displayed also his righteousness. So this righteousness is "the Lord's method of making man righteous, and vindicating divine justice by the atoning blood," Spurgeon. Thus, too, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, "for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." Luther found the secret of God's righteousness in Paul's Epistle to the Romans; it is "the righteousness that avails before God." It was wrought out by Christ in his life, death, and resurrection; it is now given to us gratuitously, by faith; it is therefore the *justitia imputata*; it renders the possessor perfectly righteous before God. Observe that the Psalmist puts "salvation" first and "righteousness" second. This means that in a marvelous way the Lord worked out "salvation" for sinful men, and, looking at it from

another and most blessed angle, worked out "righteousness" for guilty men. We are saved only when we are accounted righteous before the Lord. And just as the Lord made known his salvation, so also he openly showed this righteousness. He could not do the one without doing the other. In doing the one he at the same time did the other. Yet we should go a step farther: whenever we bring the righteousness prepared for us by Christ before the judgment bar of God, he will accept it; first because as a righteous judge he must, and if he did not would prove himself unrighteous and unjust; and secondly, because when he himself through Christ prepared this righteousness for us he acted wholly in accord with his own attribute of righteousness. What he prepared for us in Christ emanated from his own righteousness, and when now brought before him by us will always be acknowledged by his righteousness. He never could have prepared anything for us that would in any point fall short of meeting his righteous approval when laid before his judgment seat by us in faith and trust. It is thus that the subjective attribute of righteousness and justice in God himself accords and tallies with the objective righteousness prepared by God in Christ, displayed in the Gospel, made our own by faith, accepted by God at his judgment bar, and acknowledged by him in the verdict: Thy sins are forgiven thee. Koenig's definition of *ts'daqah* is therefore correct: *Bundestreue*, "covenant faithfulness which shows itself in the realization of his promises." It is, as he further says, a saving act, in accord with his gracious mind. This righteousness saves (note the Psalmist's "salvation"); and the act of preparing this righteousness for us guilty sinners, thereby saving us, is pure grace. We may add, in order to ward off an error all too common: all through the Old Testament for Israel there was the same "salvation" and "righteousness" as we now have in the New Testament, for Israel it

was embodied in the promises looking forward to Christ, for us in the promises looking back to Christ; for Israel it was mediated by types, symbols, etc. especially connected with sacrifices, for us without this preliminary mediation.

The progress in v. 3 lies in the two verbs used, viz. their difference. Only in a secondary way is there a progress of thought in the first two nouns, "his mercy and his truth." It is because the Lord had a covenant with Israel that the Psalmist sings: **He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel.** When the Lord prepared his salvation and his righteousness, and also when he revealed both, that was a remembrance of **his mercy**, really of his grace, the Ger. *Huld, favor Dei*, wholly undeserved on the part of the recipients. Being pure divine favor it excludes all human claims; and besides, it belongs wholly to him who extends this *chesed* to determine in what it shall consist and in what manner it shall be bestowed. **Truth** refers to the covenant and the promises embodied in it, and consists in God's faithfully performing his promised part. 'Amunah is related to 'Amen, our Amen, "verily." **Toward the house of Israel**, or: "in favor of the house of Israel," points to the special position of Israel as the chosen, covenant people; and "house" conceives the nation as one family with Israel as its head.— It is a mistake to try to connect "his salvation" in v. 2 in a special way with "his mercy," and "his righteousness" with "his truth," as though when salvation is subjectively experienced it appears as mercy, and righteousness as truth. This falls to pieces when we note that in the second line of v. 3 the Psalmist puts "the salvation of our God." No, grace and truth refer here to Israel, and both grace and truth underlie both "his salvation" and "his righteousness" as far as Israel is concerned. When God wrought his salvation in Christ and thought of Israel, he remembered

his truth just as he did his mercy; and likewise when he prepared and manifested his righteousness. — With the rest of mankind the Lord could do neither. There was nothing to remember, for there was no covenant nor promises to the other nations. But the Psalmist is singing of the Lord's world-wide wonder-works. So he declares: **all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.** Every word is perfect in its place and for its purpose, and defies improvement — one of those perfect proofs of Verbal Inspiration, of which the Scriptures are full. Recall the Savior's own commission: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1, 8. Also his promise: "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world," etc. Matth. 24, 14. The Psalmist means the same thing when prophetically he views as already accomplished this most wonderful promulgation. — How finely the verb is chosen *ra'u*, **have seen**, from *ra'ah*. In the case of Israel the Lord "remembered" his mercy and truth — did all Israel remember? We know many did not. In the case of the other peoples the Lord's salvation would be brought to all and be proclaimed to all, so that they should "see" it — but would all add to the seeing the believing? While on the Lord's part there was no covenant to remember for "the ends of the earth," he nevertheless made them see his salvation. "He hath remembered" is objective; they "have seen" is subjective. This seeing, too, is an advance upon the showing mentioned in v. 2 for the heathen. — And now once more the cardinal term **salvation**. It is the vital word for all mankind, even as line one in v. 2 employs it when no special set of persons is referred to. All need rescue from sin and guilt, and the safety wrought by the Lord's deliverance. No better word could have been written here. — But this salvation, the Psalmist says, is **the salvation from our God**. Here the right word is *'Elohim*, not *Yahveh*,

since "all the ends of the earth" are involved. Yet "our God" adds the significant touch that the author of this salvation was acknowledged originally by the Psalmist's people. Salvation for all men has this God of Israel alone for its author. In the possessive suffix "our" is contained the note of grace: "our God" = he whose power is exercised in our behalf. — Some of the expressions used in this Psalm are found in various connections also in Isaiah. It would be a hasty conclusion to make Isaiah the author of the Psalm, or to think that the Psalm was written after Isaiah. While the question of authorship is not authoritatively settled, the most likely author is David, and the conclusion is certainly fair that it was Isaiah who knew our Psalm and used some of its terms, just as Mary afterwards, in the Magnificat, appropriated a good part of its contents and even expressions.

4. **Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth:
make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.**
5. **Sing unto the LORD with the harp;
with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.**
6. **With the trumpets and sound of cornet
make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.**

After naming the great acts of the Lord which deserve a new song, the Psalmist calls for the grand chorus and special instruments fittingly to render that song. **Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth**, calls on the whole earth to form the chorus, and properly so, for even the ends of the earth see his salvation. And the earth is here conceived not as a unit, but as a plurality, the verb being plural. The hiphil of *ru'a* means *jauchzen* in German, as when the heart is full and breaks out in jubilation. —

Three verbs follow as if to specify this jubilation, there being such intensity calling for utterance: **make a loud noise**, with the verb *phatsach*: "jubilate joyfully"; **and rejoice**, with the verb *ranan* which has the idea of loudness in it: "exult aloud"; **and sing praise**, with the verb *zamar* ("to pluck"), used of plucking the strings of a musical instrument, hence: "make music," and that often in the way of praise. So this grand chorus of the whole earth is to acclaim the Savior-Lord and King by joyful jubilation, loud exultation, and praiseful music.

In going from v. 4 to v. 5, and likewise in going from the first to the second line in v. 5, we should note the artistic feature of step-like progression, which we noted in Ps. 122, First Sunday after Epiphany. The last word of one line is made the first of the next:

Jubilate, and exult, and *make music*.

5. *Make music* to Yahveh *with the harp*;
With the harp, and the voice of music.

Kinnor, translated **harp** is really zither, with ten strings, played either with a plectrum, or with the fingers. It is naturally mentioned first, since it was the national instrument of music especially in David's day. — But the zither is not to sound alone. So after saying: "Make music with the harp," the next line adds: "with the harp, and the voice of music (supply: let it join in); in our version: **the voice of a psalm**. Vocal music is to accompany the instrumental in fittingly acclaiming the Lord and giving expression to the jubilant feelings of the heart. — Two more instruments are named, the *chatsotsrah* and the *shophar*, the former is the **trumpet**, long and straight, the latter is a horn, translated **cornet** (often "trumpet"), most likely curved. Both were used by the Israelites for worship and for martial purposes. There is no *b^c* before *gol*. This means that the first line of v. 6 should be read like the last line of v. 5:

5. Make music to Yahveh with the harp;
With the harp, and the voice of music (let it
join in);
6. With the trumpets (make music), and the
voice of cornet (let it join in).

Note *qol* in both lines, 5 b and 6 a. — The stanza is completed by returning in the last line to the thought of the first, namely that all this joyful music is in honor of the Lord. We have the same verb heading the first and the last line of the stanza, 4 a and 6 b: *hari'u*, **make a joyful noise**, jubilate! Only now instead of the dative with *l'* we have the more sonorous *liph'ne*, **before**, or: "to the presence of," and instead of the bare *Yahveh* we have *hammelek Yahveh*, **the LORD, the King**, or: "the King Jehovah." For all that has been said of him, of his deeds and the motives behind them, as well as of the extent of their benefactions, mark him as nothing less than King. And so this hymn has come to be called the Coronation Psalm. Here David has the glorious vision of Christ the King, ruling in grace and righteousness, extending his spiritual kingdom to the ends of the earth, establishing his throne forever. At the same time David sees the subjects and worshippers of this King bowing before him, acclaiming him with joy and music, blessed in the infinite gifts that are dispensed by his royal hand. — Luther writes: "Here the worship is not to sacrifice at Jerusalem, but to preach and give thanks that the King is righteousness in all the world, i. e. who redeems from sin and death, through himself, without our merit."

7. **Let the sea roar; and the fulness thereof;
the world, and they that dwell therein.**
8. **Let the floods clap *their* hands: let the
hills be joyful together**

**9. Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge
the earth:
with righteousness shall he judge the world,
and the people with equity.**

In this third and final stanza the Psalmist turns from the marvelous acts of the Lord, which by the prophetic perfects he has described as if they had already been wrought, to the final effect which is to result from these marvelous works, namely to the Lord's world-wide reign in righteousness and equity. The whole world will then resound with joy. This stanza is thus an exposition of St. Paul's word regarding "the glorious liberty of the children of God," and the deliverance of the creature from the bondage of corruption, Rom. 8, 21. It is not the great Judgment Day that is here pictured, but the eternal reign of the Prince of Peace in the new earth. It is not a chiliastic period that is here described, but the consummation which shall follow all the saving acts of the Lord in eternity. — V. 7 takes in the whole globe, first the water and secondly the land. V. 8 follows by selecting from the water the floods and from the land the hills. But v. 8 advances beyond v. 7 by characterizing their agitation as joyful. Because the previous two stanzas contain exhortations the verbs in v. 7 and 8 of this last stanza, it seems, were translated in the same way: **Let the sea roar** . . . let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together. But these verbs simply state facts: "the sea roars," etc., really "thunders," the verb being *ra'am*. By **the fulness thereof** is meant all its waters. There is no reference to the living creatures that move in the waters; "thunders" certainly would not be appropriate to them. This line thinks of the sea or ocean as one sees it from the shore when the mighty billows roll over reefs and rocks, and the surf comes in with tremendous thunder. This thunder of the sea is

mentioned, because it is the one outstanding sound the sea produces, and because in this sound all the force, power, and volume of the sea finds expression. — The next line adds: **the world and they that dwell therein**, *thebel*, as inhabited, and that by men. The verb of the first line holds for the second. The Psalmist thinks of the vast land areas with their multitudes of human beings, and how these all joined together to shout make a thunderous noise. — **The floods**, *n^eharoth*, are the streams or rivers, such as the Euphrates. These are paralleled with the sea. The verb is highly figurative: **clap their hands**, as people do to this day when, especially in gatherings, they wish to express their approval and delight. We think of the splashing waves of the rivers. — Paralleled with the world or inhabited land are **the hills**. The verb *rannan* is the same as in the second line of v. 4 where it is rendered “rejoice,” and here in v. 8, **are joyful**, really: “exult aloud.” Both lines contain a personification, and in both verses 7 and 8 there is in the verbs the expression of volumes of sound. In nature the hills and mountain ranges are silent, in fact we speak of the silent hills. The verb “exult aloud” is thus wholly figurative, without reference to any natural voice or sound connected with hills. *Yachad*, **together**, is at the head of the line, hence does not go with the final verb: “be (are) joyful together”; but the hills together with the streams are to express their great joy. The chief point in v. 8 is the note of joy. Rivers and hills give voice to their delight. The thundering in v. 7 is thus to be understood in the same way. The Psalmist, too, cannot be said here to call upon all nature, or upon all the different creatures of God, to voice their joy. We must be content with the selection he has made: in v. 7 sea and land as the greatest and vastest portions of the globe, and then in v. 8 rivers and hills as lesser portions, yet still as

distinct and outstanding, and at the same time parallel to the greatest that were mentioned.

Our English version greatly weakens v. 9, by using no punctuation at the end of v. 8, and making the words read: "be joyful together before the Lord." But this phrase: **Before the Lord**, or: "in the presence of the Lord," as to its sense, goes with sea roaring, as well as with the streams and the hills. Nor does "before the Lord" merely state the place of their joyful activity. This powerful phrase heads a new line and also a new line of thought. **Before the Lord** is, as far as construction is concerned, absolute. The thought is: "Before the Lord they stand (sea with its fulness, world with its dwellers, streams, and hills). Put a period at the end of v. 8; put an exclamation point after: "Before the Lord." This Lord who has done all the marvelous saving works mentioned in this Psalm is now coming himself to crown and consummate all these works. He has begun forming a new era, building a new kingdom. And now he is here in person as "the Lord, the King," in all his royal power, majesty, and glory. And what he is now finally doing these last lines describe with poetic rapture. — This is first described summarily: **for he cometh to judge the earth**, and then the grand features of his final royal work are added in two more lines. *Ki* is causal, it names the tremendous cause for all this tremendous acclaim of joy on the part of sea and land. **He cometh**, *ba'*, from *bo'* following *liphne* (local: "in his presence"), cannot mean that the Lord is yet on the way, but that he is here, "has come." And that for the grandest possible purpose: **to judge the earth**. Only *shaphat* means "to exercise judgment," and in this sense "to rule" or "reign." Remember that he is called "the Lord, the King," and as such he wields judgment. The Psalmist is therefore not describing the last day and that judgment, but the grand eternal royal rule of the Lord in

judgment over the new **earth**. Some may wish to add that this rule and judgment has already begun, in the measure in which the Lord by his Word and Spirit now rules in men's hearts. But why not stay with what the Psalmist actually says when he mentions the Lord's final coming and his exercise of judgment following that. Many evil forces still have power on this sinful earth; they usurp judgment, they judge wickedly and with iniquity, condemn the godly, justify the ungodly. All this shall cease. The Psalmist sees the new era, so wonderful and blessed that all the earth acclaims it. — "To judge the earth" is now more fully interpreted: **with righteousness shall he judge the world**. The Hebrew order of words brings out the emphasis better: "He shall judge the world with righteousness." The emphatic point is that the Lord "shall judge"; and again emphatic: "with righteousness." *Tsedeq* is the right word, and *b'tsedek* means more than "in a righteous manner"; while *ts'daqah* is the quality or attribute of righteousness, *tsedeq* is the concrete means which one who has the attribute uses in judging. Thus the Lord in his judging will use "right," never anything else, namely the norm or law of right. All sin and wrong, even the roots of it which slumber in men's hearts, shall have disappeared forever. "The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it" (the glory of God). Rev. 21, 23. "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it" (the holy city); "and his servants shall serve him." Rev. 22, 3. "Behold, I make all things new." Rev. 21, 5. — A second line completes this description of the Lord's judging: **and the people with equity**. Where before we had "the earth," we now have "the people" or plural "peoples." Man is the crown of creation, and thus salvation centers in him, and likewise the consummation of this salvation here described. **Equity**, *mishor*, means "level plain," and thus

“evenness.” The Psalmist has the plural, which we may say takes in all the relations and conditions of the peoples. In them all there shall be not a single deviation, break, or unevenness in the right with which the Lord rules them. Thus the whole earth will be the Lord’s kingdom, filled from end to end with righteousness, and as a result with happiness, satisfaction, peace, and unending joy. “He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Rev. 22, 20.

SUGGESTIONS

The preacher ought to like this text, for it just about skeletonizes itself. The three stanzas form three parts, and the theme is at the head: “O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvelous things.” Of course, this is analytical.—Yet there are those who will spoil the outline even of such a text, like A. Pfeiffer, who offers two with categories, the first as his main outline: 1) Who sings it? 2) How rings it? 3) Whither wings it? In the German the three rhyming verbs are more appropriate, but parts like these are only formal, mere categories, which even a beginner should avoid as too cheap. Another mistake, by the same man, is to word the parts by using other Scripture passages. This always confuses, by leaving the impression as if one is preaching on the other passage used. If the wording of the parts (and theme) cannot be drawn from the language of the text itself, then the only alternative is to use a wording of our own, which, of course, may include the appropriation of proper hymn lines.

“O Sing unto the Lord a New Song!”

- I. *Recount his saving works.*
- II. *Join the grand chorus.*
- III. *Anticipate the coming glory.*

Or, drawing partly from the words of the text:

- I. *The song of salvation.*
- II. *The song of jubilation.*
- III. *The song of anticipation.*

This is the Coronation Psalm. In it the Lord, the King, is praised and magnified. The sermon may pivot on that point:

Make Joyful Music before the Lord, the King!

- I. *Sing of the marvelous works with which he established his kingdom.*
- II. *Sing of the righteous reign with which he will crown his kingdom.*

The Coronation of the Lord, the King.

- I. *The crown:* Its jewels are marvelous, namely victory, salvation, righteousness, remembrance for Israel, revelation for the ends of the earth.
- II. *The acclaim:* By all the earth; in joy and exultation; with the grandest of music.
- III. *The scepter:* Judgment in righteousness and equity; in the new earth and over all who dwell therein; under which it is joy to bow.

There are also four cardinal concepts in the text, each of which may be made the central jewel in the theme: "marvelous things"—"victory"—"salvation"—"righteousness." These four may also be arranged together as so many parts, working into them the rest of the Psalm, namely, the making known to all the world (the Gospel revelation) — the exulting joy — the expectation of the coming reign in judgment and equity. Here is an effort in the direction of the latter suggestion:

Who is He that Shall Judge the World with Righteousness?

- I. *He who has done marvelous works reaching to the ends of the earth.*
- II. *He who has gained the victory bringing joy to all the people.*
- III. *He who has wrought salvation spreading now even to the heathen.*
- IV. *He it is who shall rule as King in righteousness over the new earth for ever.*

This, of course, is synthesis, a rearrangement of the text material, laying it into a new pattern. In the first three parts the marvelous works, the victory, and the salvation deal with the same substance, but this is so great and rich that it can easily be viewed under these three aspects, if only the preacher avoids the common fault of speaking quite in general, and

instead unfolds what is distinctive in each of the terms used. Thus marvelous works are those that transcend all human power of comprehension; victory triumphs over hostile forces; salvation means rescue, deliverance, safety, assurance, and peace. In speaking of righteousness, for which the Hebrew has two terms, one in v. 2 and the other in v. 9, the former can well be used as the basis for the latter, i. e., the righteousness revealed in the Gospel, with that exercised in the eternal reign.

THE PENTECOST CYCLE



ROGATE

Is. 55, 6-11

With Rogate we enter the Pentecost cycle, which extends to Trinity Sunday. It resembles the Christmas cycle in having three festival heights in it, Ascension, Pentecost, and Trinity. The last indeed is really the finale of the entire festival half of the church year, and in so far reaches back beyond the Pentecost cycle. The inner relation of the six texts comprised in this cycle is not as close, and naturally cannot be, as in other cycles. The Pentecost festival dominates the cycle. Rogate, Ascension, Exaudi, and the two Pentecost texts (the second for Pentecost Monday) are controlled by the great deed of God, the Outpouring of the Spirit. — Rogates the great prayer Sunday, and prayer is the product of the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts. This is why Rogate is in the Pentecost cycle. The text selected for this Sunday, Is. 55, 6-11, begins with a direct admonition to seek the Lord and call upon him, to which all that is added on repentance, on the greatness of God's thoughts and the effectiveness of his Word is easily made auxiliary — The Ascension festival has its fixed import. The text fitted to it is excellent, Ps. 110, 1-4, for Christ himself used the opening verse of it to confound his enemies. It speaks of Christ's exaltation at God's right hand and of his glorious rule. — When we understand that Exaudi is the *Dominica expectationis*, the Expectation Sunday, so-called since during the ten days between Ascension and Pentecost the disciples were filled with expectation of the promised gift of the Spirit, the choice of the 42nd Psalm as the Old Testament text for this day becomes clear. Here the Psalmist's long-

ing for God is described, a longing of which the Psalmist himself says that it shall be fulfilled. The greatest fulfillment did come at Pentecost. — In an Old Testament text for Pentecost we expect the promise of the coming of the Holy Ghost. This we have in Ezek. 36, 22-28, and much more, especially also the new heart. Pentecost Monday has Is. 44, 1-6, equally fine on the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, to which is added the naming and the marking of those who receive this Spirit. Since the day is not used in our churches we pass this text by. — Then for the festival of the Holy Trinity our series offers one of the grandest texts that could be desired, Is. 6, 1-8, the prophet's vision of Jehovah on his exalted throne, with the Trisagion resounding before him in a doxology on his glory, and the sending of the prophet on the great mission of the Triune God. A second text for Trinity is Num. 6, 22-27. — All the texts are in the tones and colors of the Old Testament, but these are wonderful in their anticipation of the New Testament richness, and because of their newness, when properly handled by the preacher, bound to delight our congregations. This cycle, while the shortest of all, is also exceptional in the distinct significance of each Sunday and festival and in the wealth of saving truth packed into it. — Let us turn now to the text for Rogate.

We are in the second half of Isaiah, and in the second great triad of this half, which deals with the deliverance through Christ, and in which the central chapter is the 53rd. This second great triad is divided into lesser triads. The first of these shows the Lord's faithfulness making Israel's deliverance through the Great Servant (Christ) assured; the second shows the deliverance through the Great Servant's suffering and exaltation, with Israel, too, raised from wretchedness to glory; the third follows with urgings and admonitions to accept this deliverance, and the repudiation

of those who reject it. Our text is from this third of the lesser triads. This already shows the general trend of our text. This third lesser triad, chapters 55-57, begins with a fine evangelical call to repentance, embracing chapter 55, continues with the promise of grace and glory to those who repent in 56, 1-8, and closes with a rejection of the impenitent and a promise of sanctification to the repentant in 56, 9-57, 21, thus presenting still smaller triads as a division of the third lesser one in the second greater one. — Chapter 55, containing the evangelical call to repentance, begins with the call to the Gentiles, v. 1-5, and closes with the call to the sinners in Israel, v. 6-13. Our text has v. 6-11, omitting 12-13. There are three stanzas in our text: the first 6-7; the second 8-9; the third 10-11. There is a fourth, v. 12-13, but we stop short of this. — Now while the three stanzas of which our text is composed are a call to repentance for sinful Israel, this call has the form of *an admonition to prayer*, and this admonition is made strong by the addition of promises of mercy and forgiveness, by an explanation of the Lord's ways and thoughts, and by the assurance that the Lord's Word will do its work. — Now we are ready for the first stanza:

6. **Seek ye the LORD while he may be found,
call ye upon him while he is near:**
7. **Let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts:
and let him return unto the LORD, and he
will have mercy upon him;
and to our God, for he will abundantly
pardon.**

It is evident that our text is not one of the ordinary ones on prayer, one that directs believers to ask the various promised blessings of the Lord. For it is addressed to the wicked and unrighteous who by their

sins have forfeited their rights of appeal to God as his children. This text deals with that special and notable function of prayer, really the most blessed of all, which permits such sinners, when the Lord draws near to them by his Word and grace, and touches their hearts, to ask him for the very highest of his gifts, namely his pardoning grace. Now the Lord, who is ever ready to bestow this supreme gift, will assuredly also after that be ready and willing to bestow all lesser gifts, although even in our Christian lives we must continue to confess our sins and pray for grace and pardon. — V. 5 shows that the first five verses of our chapter are addressed to the Gentiles; and v. 12-13 show that our text is addressed to Israelites, namely to these as having hitherto turned from the Lord. They are therefore admonished: **Seek ye the LORD.** The verb *darash* with the accusative of person means to seek by drawing near to; here to approach him in order to beg for his help and salvation. He is thus properly termed the covenant Lord, *Yahveh*. — **While he may be found** is all one word in Hebrew, *b^ehimmatz'o*, the const. of the infinitive niphal with a suffix, and that suffix is not subjective (our subjective genitive), but verbal (our objective genitive); not “in *his* being found,” but “in his letting *himself* be found.” The English must circumscribe as in our version. No sinner can seek God of himself. When modern theologians speak of “god-seekers,” for instance in heathen lands, they are fooled by the religious fervor of certain individuals, which will most likely make them turn the more strenuously from the true God. Only when the Lord himself draws nigh to the sinner, can the sinner seek him. That drawing nigh is always, mark it well, always, by means of his Word. It is as here in our text. Isaiah’s appeal by means of the Lord’s Word and promise touches the sinner’s heart, moves and stirs it, and so, drawn and enabled by the Word and grace, the sinner may seek the Lord.

— The second line repeats and thus emphasizes the call; but it does this by using new terms which help to make the call clearer and stronger: **call ye upon him**, from *qara'*, here in the sense of the German *anrufen*. Here again an infinitive is added with *l^e* and the suffix, this time the *kal*, and the suffix is subjective: “in his being near,” **while he is near**. This line is an advance over the previous one. It bids the sinner approach; this bids him call as having approached. — Both lines contain the idea of opportunity. Grace is not extended for ever. There is a day, an hour of grace; a time when the Lord knocks at the sinner's door, calls to the lost sheep, draws with his Word (John 6, 44). If that time is obdurately passed, the Lord withdraws, removes afar, grace is withheld, the sinner is left to perish.

In v. 7 the call to the sinner is fortified by the most appealing promise. The preacher ought to see and feel the full force of the drawing power in these and similar promises. Here is the wicked sinner with all his sin and guilt, and here is the Lord stretching out his gracious hands to him, offering full pardon and forgiveness. That promise cries out for acceptance, for the sinner to believe it; it is full of power to awaken and kindle faith, and thus to save. — *Rasha'*, **the wicked**, the godless man, who disregards God and follows his own evil lusts and desires, here characterized as **his way**, his course of life. Yet though he is so base the Lord calls him graciously: **Let the wicked forsake his way**, *'azab*, abandon, turn away from it. It should go without saying that sin has such a hold on the natural man that he is absolutely powerless to break away. Yet the Lord's call and Word bring the necessary power with them in every case. Note that the call to forsake the way of godlessness is the negative side of what must take place in the heart to obtain salvation. — The call is repeated and thus emphasized, but in

new terms. In the margin of our version **the unrighteous man** is called "the man of iniquity," 'ish 'aven, *Mann des Wehetuns* (A. Pieper), 'aven signifying misfortune, or the grief it causes, then too expanded into baseness. The wicked and the base are both made so by their love of sin. This man is called on to forsake his **thoughts**. With the change of conduct there is to go the inner change of heart whence the thoughts flow. No mere outward reform will do. — The negative turning away from sin's ways and thoughts must go together with the positive turning unto the Lord. So the call adds: **and let him return unto the LORD**, using the verb so generally employed for conversion, *shub*. This turning or returning always centers in the faith and confidence of the heart. So we have here the two parts of which conversion consists, namely contrition or the sorrow of the heart for sin together with faith or confident trust in the covenant Lord. — The significant addition illumines the title *Yahveh*: **and he will have mercy upon him**. The root meaning of *racham* is "to love tenderly" or "brood over," which shows the tender solicitude in the love here expressed. This love is the power that reaches out to the lost sinner to win him by faith. — **And to our God** has no new verb, just as in the first two lines one verb, namely "forsake," went with the two subjects. These two, *Yahveh* and *'Elohenu*, are constant companion terms. A. Pieper's remark is in place, that *'Elohenu* is no textual error and no indication of forgetfulness on the part of the prophet when God himself is said to employ this title in his own appeal. For God takes this title from the lips of his people and uses it himself as a technical term, just as he also loves to call himself *Yahveh*. In the possessive *our* God there lies the note of grace, which must never be overlooked. — Now to "our God" is added: **for he will abundantly pardon**. Here we have "for," *ki*, where the previous line merely has

“and,” *l^e*. Thus the fact of tender love is paired with the reason, namely pardon. *Yarbeh*, the *hiphil* from *rabah*, signifies: “he makes much,” he increases, or multiplies, and is often used with an infinitive with or without *l^e*, here *lisloach*, from *salach*, “to pardon” or forgive: he will pardon many times. In the first two lines which speak of the sinner, the act is mentioned first (“forsake his way”) and the heart second (“forsake his thoughts”); while now in speaking of the Lord the two are reversed, first the mercy in his heart, secondly the act of abundant pardon — a beautiful chiasmic arrangement. Then there is this richness of thought in the last two lines: “upon him” makes the matter personal for each sinner that turns to the Lord; and abundant pardon covers all the sins and guilt of each sinner. Thus personal grace, and infinite pardon. Putting it all together in the significant order of the inspired words: the sinner shows by forsaking his way that his thoughts have changed and that he has really turned to the Lord his God; and the Lord his God receives him in mercy and shows it by his abundant pardoning. “In these elements,” namely proffered mercy and pardon, “lies the divine convincing power of the Gospel” for sinners (A. Pieper). The call to repentant prayer is ended. Now follow two stanzas which support that call and help to make it most effective.

8. **For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,
saith the LORD.**
9. **For as the heavens are higher than the
earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

How the content of this stanza supports the call of the foregoing stanza is in question among the com-

mentators. Delitzsch thinks that the thoughts and ways of the Lord are not as changeable as those of men, as unreliable, or as helpless, and that this is shown by the next stanza where we are told that the Word of the Lord does not fail of its effect. A. Pieper thinks, the thoughts and ways of the Lord are here put in contrast to those of the wicked and unrighteous; the latter lead to destruction, while those of the Lord are good, right, holy, and lead to salvation, as the following stanza corroborates. Pieper is clearly correct, although he does not mention the exegetical point which shows this correctness. The mention of **thoughts**, *machashaboth*, and **ways**, *d^erakim*, very evidently recalls these two terms as used of the sinner in v. 6. That fact assures us that a contrast is intended. Now as regards the sinner there was no suggestion of changeableness, unreliability, or impotence in his thoughts and ways. So that cannot be the point of contrast. These were wicked ways and base thoughts. Those of the Lord must be the opposite, blessed, holy, saving thoughts and ways. As such they are **higher**, and not only to a degree, but infinitely: **as the heavens are higher than the earth**, a distance no man has ever measured. And here the natural order, used already in v. 7 (where "mercy" is first, and "pardon" second), is retained: first the "thoughts" and then the "ways," or his course of action. Daechsel writes: "The thoughts of God are not our thoughts in regard to their contents, in regard to their aims, in regard to their effect. Ours are directed to sin, his to salvation; ours are impotent, his are carried into effect by means of his creative Word. So also our ways are not his ways. Ours are directed toward pleasure, his toward real blessedness; ours are uncertain and miss the goal, his are firm and fixed and attain the goal. Think, for instance, of the fortunes of men, of their plans, of their self-invented attempts at justi-

fyng and saving themselves — ever there appears a heaven-wide gulf between God's ways and ours." V. 8 denies the *identity* of God's thoughts and ways, and ours; v. 9 then comes and points out the *tremendous difference*. *Ki* by itself, in v. 9, indicates comparison, even if *ken* did not follow; but with *ken* following there can be no question.

10. **For as the rain cometh down, and the snow
from heaven,
and returneth not thither,
but watereth the earth, and maketh it
bring forth and bud,
that it may give seed to the sower, and
bread to the eater:**
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 whereunto
I sent it.**

This beautiful eight-line stanza is a sample of how God's thoughts are vastly higher than those of men. And these thoughts correspond: the beneficence in nature reflects the far greater beneficence in the kingdom of the spirit. As his thoughts and ways combine to feed our earthly bodies with choicest food, so his thoughts and ways operate to feed our souls with heavenly manna, namely forgiveness, life and salvation. — The general proposition in v. 8-9 is elucidated by the particularization in v. 10-11, hence the connective: **For** as the rain etc. In reading a comparison like this: *ki*, at head of v. 10, followed by *ken*, at head of v. 11: **as . . . so**, we must get the order of the two that are like each other aright. Trench in his introductory remarks on the parables has these telling statements: "All lovers of truth

readily acknowledge these mysterious harmonies, and the force of arguments derived from them. To them the things on earth are copies of the things in heaven. They know that the earthly tabernacle is made after the pattern of things seen in the Mount, Ex. 25, 40; 1 Chron. 28, 11-12; and the question suggested by the angel in Milton is often forced upon their meditations, —

‘What if earth

Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein

Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?’

For it is a great misunderstanding of the matter to think of these as happily, but yet arbitrarily, chosen illustrations taken with a skilful selection from the great stock and storehouse of unappropriated images; from whence it would have been possible that the same skill might have selected others as good, or nearly as good. Rather they belong to one another, the type and the thing typified, by an inward necessity; they were linked together long before by the law of a secret affinity.” P. 14, read also what follows. *Geshem* is usually the fall or winter **rain**, so essential for the wheat crop. *Yered*, the piel of *yarad*, **cometh down**, is the imperfect with present meaning, and is really gnomic of what occurs regularly, hence: “as the rain is accustomed to fall.” As the season progresses this rain often turns to snow: **and the snow from heaven**. — The clause: **and returneth not thither**, is not absolute, for this moisture does eventually return thither by evaporation. It returns not thither *ki'im*, “except” **it watereth the earth**, the verb from *yarah*, “to saturate.” The tenses after *ki'im* are real perfects stating facts.—The effect of this watering is described by three coordinate verbs: **and maketh it bring forth**, the verb from *yalad*, the hiphil *holidah* being causal: “make to bear.” Likewise *tsamach*, hiphil: “make to sprout”; **and bud**. First there is

the germination of the seed, then the green sprouts of young growth. — Finally, the harvest follows: **that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater**, really: “and give.” The “seed,” *zera'*, is mentioned first, since the harvest consists of wheat which is again sown; then *lechem*, “bread,” made from the wheat, or perhaps barley, the latter much used in Palestine. This is the regular course of nature, arranged by the Creator himself, according to his thoughts, and put into execution as one of his ways. It is miraculous, beyond human comprehension, although our familiarity with the constantly recurring process so generally makes us think we know all about it. Yet this feature is here a secondary consideration; the main one is expressed in the final clause, the gift of seed and bread for the nourishment of man. God's thoughts and ways in this example of his work in nature are in the highest degree good, kind, beneficent. The *tertium comparationis*, or point of comparison, accordingly lies in the fact here brought out, that the rain and snow accomplish their beneficent purpose, and do not return to the Lord who sends them void of that accomplishment.

This earthly arrangement regarding the rain, snow, seed, and bread is a humble parallel to the Lord's spiritual and heavenly arrangement with the Word, and thus the lesser illustrates and reflects the greater: **So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth.** It is the Lord himself who is instructing us. But note well “*my* Word”; and that we may catch the full import of this possessive the relative clause is added: “which goeth forth out of my mouth.” Men may pervert that Word, subtracting from it, adding to it, changing and adulterating it. Then the story will be different. Observe well, however, that the Lord has actually sent us *his* Word. If we ask where it is, the Scriptures are the answer. More than this: he himself speaks this Word, it goes forth from

his mouth. Though written down for us by verbal Inspiration, and thus fixed and unchangeable, it still goes forth from the Lord's mouth, goes forth ever and ever. Inspired men have uttered and written it. We may say they are the Lord's mouth. By and through them he, the Lord himself, keeps on speaking. Every time we read, study, remember, contemplate that written Word, the Lord speaks it anew, just as he has ever spoken it and will ever speak it; and it is for us to hear, heed, believe, accept, follow that Word as the Lord's own voice now speaking to us. — It is of this Word that the Lord says: **it shall not return unto me void**, *reqam*, empty, with empty hands. Like a messenger sent to bring something the Word shall not come back bringing nothing. On the contrary, the Lord's Word **shall accomplish that which I please**. *Ki'im* is often used for "on the contrary," thus after negatives when the opposite is to be stated. What the Lord pleases is his *εὐδοκία*, "good pleasure," as the New Testament has it. It couples the idea of free determination with something good and gracious. At the bottom of this expression lies the great idea that when one extends unmerited grace and mercy it is he and he alone who decides how, in what way, by what means, in what measure he will extend it, and no man, least of all the beneficiaries of his good pleasure, i. e. grace and mercy, dare presume in any way to dictate anything on these points. The Lord's grace is sovereign. St. Paul brings this out with overwhelming effect in Rom. 9. Yet in what the Lord pleases there is no idea of arbitrariness, nothing of hidden, mysterious decisions in the deterministic sense of Calvinism. All the good pleasure of the Lord lies open before us in the Gospel. — The matter is so important that we have a restatement of it: **and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it**. The *hiphil* of *tsalach* also has the meaning "to be successful," or "to succeed." Instead of the Lord's good

pleasure we now have "whereunto I sent it." — The Word is thus conceived of as a living agent, in a kind of personification. It is never a mere sound of words. Like a living messenger it runs on its errand. It is filled with power sufficient for the work assigned to it. As Delitzsch puts it, "here perhaps to melt ice, there to heal and rescue"; and it does not return until its assigned task is done. In that the Word is said to return to the Lord, its divine and living nature is presupposed. Human words leave our lips and run on; they never return. Yet there is a difference: in nature the Word has the commission simply to effect the Lord's will, and it does so effect it; in grace the Word has the commission to follow a certain order, the *ordo salutis*, and, of course, it carries that into effect. When sent to melt the ice, the Word melts it; but when sent to save the sinner, the Word may and again may not save him. For it is not sent to save absolutely, but according to a certain order, namely by the means of grace and by faith. That order is followed. If the sinner obdurately resists, the Word in his case has no failure to report back to the Lord. The sinner perishes, but the Word has done its work upon him none the less. It has cleared the grace of the Lord from any charge of having passed that sinner by, it has vindicated the Lord's honor. So the Word never fails. To those whom it wins it is the savor of life unto life; to those whom it damns (because of their obdurate unbelief) it is the savor of death unto death. — And now the richness of the comparison here made comes fully to view. Just as rain and snow are the secondary causes in the growth of the grain and in the bread from that grain, so the Word of the Lord's mouth affects, penetrates, and fills with life the human heart. This Word gives the prophet, who is like the sower, the living seed he is to scatter into men's hearts, and it furnishes the bread that nourishes the soul, Deut. 8, 3; John 6, 27 and 32-33 and 51. Still these points,

while beautiful, are secondary. The heart of the comparison lies in the energy with which the Word, like the rain and snow, carries out the Lord's beneficent will.

SUGGESTIONS

First of all, keeping our eyes on the text, we note that these belong together: The Holy Spirit, the Word with the heaven-high thoughts and ways of the Lord, conversion, prayer. There is a Pentecost light all through this text. It is well to note, too, that this is no ordinary text on prayer, but a text on the basic prayer of contrition and faith from which all other prayer is born.

There are altogether too many preachers given to designing analytical outlines. They are like fiddlers who play only on one string of their instrument, as if there were no other strings. Their narrowness may be due to their early training; it generally is, and they have never gotten beyond it. They are sure to see in this text with its three poetical Hebrew stanzas the three parts of their sermon, and will proceed on that line and look no further. Well, analysis may be used this time; in very simple fashion thus:

Pray!

- I. *For the Lord's grace and pardon.*
- II. *In accord with the Lord's thoughts and ways.*
- III. *Trusting in the Lord's Word.*

In the elaboration one could use these ideas: the Lord addresses sinners and calls for the prayer of contrition and faith. Even if we are already contrite and believing, we are still sinners and must repeat this basic prayer, as we do in every confession we make, and especially in the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer. And there are two things that mightily move us to such prayer, first the Lord's nearness which is a golden opportunity, secondly the Lord's promise, to each personally, and of abundant pardon. — Then, in part two: drop all your own thoughts and ways of self-righteousness, of doubt of grace and pardon, and of the Lord's distance and unwillingness to answer. Line up with the Lord's thoughts and ways, with his own righteousness prepared in Christ Jesus, his wonderful readiness to extend grace and pardon, etc. — Finally, in part three, let the rain and snow

teach you, realize the saving power of his Word, trust it at all hazards. So pray! — Kleinert offers an outline with one synthetic feature:

Prayer in the Christian's Life.

- I. *The Christian's duty — for the Lord is near that we may seek him, v. 6.*
- II. *The Christian's nourishment — for by praying we receive the power of the Lord's sowing, v. 10-11.*
- III. *The Christian's blessedness — for by praying we become certain of the Lord's thoughts of peace, v. 7-9.*

The synthesis is in transposing in the sermon v. 10-11 and v. 7-9. This outline, however, must not lead us to make a means of grace out of prayer; as it reads it might do this in the last two parts. — We like Kleinert's other outline better:

The Right Kind of Divine Service.

- I. *It seeks God where he may be found, v. 6.*
- II. *It asks us to test hand and heart whether they are clean, v. 7.*
- III. *It leads us into God's own thoughts, v. 9.*
- IV. *It dismisses us not without fruit, v. 10-11.*

Yet one might do better by the text and the sermon parts. Let us try:

- I. *It consists of contrition and faith receiving grace and pardon.*
- II. *It rises to the thoughts and ways of the Lord, dropping our own.*
- III. *It trusts in the Lord's Word, believing indeed that it never returns void.*

These two are analytical in structure.

Of the outlines offered on this text we reject those that treat only part of the text, like this one: "Concerning the Word of God" — a theme entirely too wide, merely announcing a general subject, big enough for several volumes; with these parts: "It comes from heaven; it works on earth; it leads to heaven" — rather thin in what is thus predicated of the Word. So also the themes: "Concerning Conversion," and "Concerning the Height of the Divine Thoughts." All these also are not Rogate subjects.

The three Hebrew stanzas comprising our text are no reason for making just three parts in the sermon, and altogether no reason for playing our tune on the analytical string only. Just lay out before you the sermon timber in this text piece by piece, and then consider how you can build it up into a fine, attractive house. Here we have: 1) seeking and calling; 2) the Lord near and to be found; 3) thus the acceptable hour, the day of grace; 4) the sinner with his way and thoughts; 5) turning or conversion, with its two parts: away from sin, and unto the Lord, i. e., contrition and faith; 6) grace, personal; 7) pardon, which means forgiveness of sin, or justification, in abundance; 8) the Lord's heaven-high thoughts and ways, all directed to true salvation; 9) the constantly recurring spectacle of the rain and snow, on to the seed and bread; 10) the counterpart in the Word, the Lord's, by inspiration; 11) the Lord's good pleasure as the commission of the Word; 12) the perfect efficacy of the Word. Who would want more or better sermon material? Add the general setting for it all, the idea of Rogate as the Prayer Sunday, with Pentecost near and its reference to the Holy Spirit. Just to break away entirely from the analytic idea, which would attempt to follow in order from point one to point twelve, let us view all this material from the angle of the last points, namely, the Lord's Word.

How the Lord's Word Invites us to Prayer.

By it the Lord

- I. *Draws near to us sinners.*
- II. *Reveals the good pleasure of his grace.*
- III. *Shows us his saving thoughts and ways.*
- IV. *Pictures to us its heavenly power.*
- V. *Opens to us the gate of pardon.*
- VI. *Moves us by his Spirit to contrition and faith.*
- VII. *And thus impels us to seek him and call on him for all our soul's needs.*

Just get rid of the fear of so many parts, and that they would make the sermon too long. *The more main parts, the fewer sub-parts!* Two sub-parts, and these brief, suffice. That means that the work of division is practically done, once the main parts are in order. There is no unwritten homiletical law that we should have only two parts or three, and no more. It is following a rut to use no more than three parts in every sermon. It is homiletical narrowness to do so. Be more flexible. Get more variety. The stereotyped two or three parts become tire-

some to the hearer. They are like a woman always dressed in the same way; let her have a new dress once in a while, if not oftener. Do not be so homiletically poor.

What the text says about the Word is so weighty that it constitutes a strong invitation to view the whole text from that angle, though retaining the Rogate idea. But there is also the Lord's mercy (grace) and his abundant pardon. Survey the text from this vantage point.

The Lord's Supreme Gifts to Us Poor Sinners.

- I. His grace and pardon.*
- II. The crown of his thoughts and ways.*
- III. The good pleasure of his will.*
- IV. The gift of his saving Word.*
- V. The joy of the repentant heart.*
- VI. Our daily prayer and praise.*

Let these two synthetical arrangements suffice. They only touch the possibilities that lie open in this direction.

Scriver writes: "The sense is: Do not be surprised that I say, with God there is much forgiveness, and he will be merciful even to the godless when they repent. For you human beings are indeed so minded that you do not like to forgive and will not forget, if some one has grossly and often insulted you; for which reason you also judge me according to your mind and thoughts, as though I, too, would be so hard and so unwilling to pardon. However, my thoughts are here as far removed from yours as heaven is from earth."—Luther: "God says: my Word shall not return empty-handed. Therefore there must be among us some real, godly and holy Christians and children of God, however few possibly they may be; otherwise the Word of God would be in vain among us, a thing that is impossible. Therefore this, too, must be certain, that the Holy Spirit is with us who teaches his Word purely and graces it with other gifts. Such faith cannot be without fruits and good works, John 15, 5; and in particular he is not without prayer, by which he is able to do all things, John 14, 13 and 20; Mark 11, 24."

ASCENSION DAY

Ps. 110, 1-4

This Psalm, or a portion of it, is the inevitable text for the festival of Christ's Ascension. That is due to the use made of the first verse of this Psalm by Christ himself, and then repeatedly by the apostles.

But to start with, we must settle the cardinal question: Did David write this Psalm? or did some other poet write it about David? There are those like H. Koelling who assert the latter. He, too, arrives at Christ, but by the roundabout road via David. This is the effect the destructive higher criticism of the Old Testament has had on a man like Koelling. So with others. They lightly brush aside the strongest and clearest evidence of the New Testament. They swear by their self-made canon, that *all* prophetic utterances in the Old Testament must have an Old Testament historical basis, i. e. must refer first of all to some cotemporary occurrence, and only via such occurrence to the New Testament counterpart. So invariably they try to dig up the Old Testament situation they think they must have for each prophecy, and when there are no such suitable situations, they seize one somewhere and squeeze it into place. This kind of exegesis condemns itself in spite of the learning with which it may be studded. The preacher must be on his guard against it, if he would keep his message true and unpoisoned.

“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my

Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word." Matth. 22, 41-46; Mk. 12, 35-37; Luke 20, 41, 44. Christ's proof rests on two points, first that David wrote the Psalm, secondly that Jehovah called David's son David's Lord. If neither is true, Jesus tricked the Pharisees. They believed David the author, and that "Lord" meant the Messiah, David's descendant. Jesus held the same opinion. But if these two points were not facts, if somebody else wrote the Psalm, and if "Lord" meant David, was Jesus merely mistaken, like the Pharisees? A Jesus who made mistakes is not the Messiah and Son of God. And here we would have a mistaken Jesus proving to equally mistaken Pharisees that he is God's Son, which he could not be if he had been mistaken! Wonderful exegesis that leads into such self-contradiction and self-refutation. But if only the Pharisees were mistaken, if they alone imagined David the author, and "Lord" the Messiah, if Jesus knew better, namely that someone else was the author, and "Lord" meant David himself in the mind of that author, then Jesus abused the ignorance of the Pharisees like some tricky lawyer in court. Then he proved his divinity by a fake proof, which holds only for people equally as ignorant as the Pharisees. In other words, this alternative ends like the other: Jesus proves his divinity by in reality disproving it. Yet there are exegetes who are ready to pay such a price to maintain their own self-made canons. — Now read Acts 2, 34-35, and both St. Peter and St. Luke must be placed in the same class with Jesus. Look at 1 Cor. 15, 25, and include St. Paul. Finally, Heb. 1, 13: "To which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" and 10, 13: "From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made

his footstool"; which doubly includes the writer of Hebrews.

But it is urged that in no other Psalm does David write of the Messiah so that type (David) and antitype (Christ) clearly stand apart, the one over against the other. The deduction is then made, as incontrovertible, that David could not in our Psalm write so as to make each wholly distinct from the other. We challenge both the deduction and the premises. Even if David in no other Psalm wrote as he did in our Psalm, that would not prove that in this one Psalm he could not have written in an exceptional way. But read Ps. 2, 7 and 12, and see how David there distinguishes the Messiah from himself. And Ps. 22, 1-19, our text for Good Friday, where no sound exegesis is able to find in the historical experience of David himself that which David foretells of the Messiah. Delitzsch indeed, and we are sorry, yields these two instances in the Psalms, but parts of his own exegesis contradict him. We are glad, however, that he points to 2 Sam. 23, 1-7 as a clear case where David unquestionably distinguished himself as the type from Christ, the antitype. David's glory was fading fast, even also as he was nearing his end. All his own weakness was apparent as never before. In that condition he speaks of the Messiah: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds" (David's sun was setting fast in many clouds!); as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain" (David was like dying grass), etc. If here David, without question, dissociated himself from the image of the Messiah; if here he did it, as he himself says, by a direct revelation and word from Jehovah, why, then, is it impossible for him to do so in our Psalm where again he says that he received a direct revelation from Jehovah? So this contention also fails,

and the conclusion of Delitzsch is true: "The type, come to a consciousness of himself, lays down his crown at the feet of the Antitype."

The title of this Psalm is The King-Priest. Delitzsch divides into three stanzas: 1-2; 3-4; 5-7. Our text contains the first two.

1. **The LORD said unto my Lord,
Sit thou at my right hand,
until I make thine enemies thy footstool.**
2. **The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength
out of Zion:
rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.**

The expression *n'um Yahveh* means literally: "communication of Jehovah." It is placed at times in the middle of such a communication, like the Latin *inquit*, or at the end, but repeatedly as in our Psalm it heads the statement attributed to the Lord. Here it is freely rendered: **The LORD said.** *N'um* really means *Eingerauntes*, something secretly whispered into the ear. It thus implies that the communication is some mystery that otherwise would not be known by the recipient. At times, as here, the recipient is also added with *l'*: **unto my Lord, 'Adonai**, a title applied to kings and grand dignitaries. — Everything, of course, depends on who it is that here writes *my Lord*. The introductory remarks have settled it for us that this is David. He then tells us that Jehovah, the covenant Lord and God communicated what follows to one whom he, namely David, recognizes as his Lord. David, the king, has one over him, beside *Yahveh* himself, who is David's Lord. This Lord is not named further, only described. It is the Messiah, as Jesus tells us in the New Testament, and as other New Testament references corroborate. Generally in the Old Testament the Son who became the Messiah is called *Yahveh*, but again he is plainly distinguished

as a distinct person, thus for instance as the Angel of *Yahveh*, who yet speaks as *Yahveh*, and is thus himself God; and as the Servant of *Yahveh*, in the second half of Isaiah. Likewise here *Yahveh* and '*Adonai*' appear as distinct persons. This sheds a clear light on the Old Testament revelation of God. — It is a great error to suppose that the Israelites knew nothing concerning the Holy Trinity, and that in the Old Testament the mystery of the Trinity was not revealed. Certainly the revelation in the New Testament was much fuller and thus clearer. But the Old Testament has all the revelation needed for that period. Here in our Psalm one divine person speaks to another divine person. There are other such cases entirely clear and striking. All three divine persons thus appear in the Old Testament. It is very noteworthy that in the days of the Baptist and of Jesus the Jews never rebelled when the Son of God and the Spirit of God were mentioned beside the Father; they objected only to Jesus' claim that he, the lowly Nazarene, was the Son. In the education of the Twelve there was no difficulty at all as regards the three divine persons, although the Twelve as Jews thoroughly held to the Oneness of the divine Being. These things must all be taken together when the Old Testament doctrine concerning the Trinity is considered. — How David knew what the Father (*Yahveh*) here said to the Son (*'Adonai*) is not indicated. David was a prophet, and this communication between the divine persons was made known to him by direct revelation.

David reports that the Father made this communication to the Son as the Messiah: **Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.** The Hebrew *sheb limini* has been made a title of the Messiah: Sheblimini. Hengstenberg says, it is full of consolation for the Lord's congregation at all times, and he who is able to take into his heart this one word has escaped all fear and uneasiness,

and it is all one to him whether there be many or few foes, he looks with happy smiles at their raging and their vain exertions. And the word is the more comforting since Christ sits at God's right hand not only for himself, but lifts up his own thither also, already in time and more gloriously in eternity, Rev. 3, 21; 2 Tim. 2, 12. Yahveh's **right hand** is his divine power and majesty, also therefore called "the right hand of power." Compare the parallel passages on God's right hand. To **sit at** the right hand means to exercise this power and majesty to the fullest extent. Yahveh's word to the Son as the Messiah refers to that Son's human nature. As the Son begotten from eternity of the Father he is coequal with the Father, and together with the Father and the Spirit exercises all power and majesty. When the Son assumed our human nature he communicated to that nature his divine attributes. Just as a king, marrying a humble maiden, by virtue of the marriage makes her queen, so that she shares in all his royal prerogatives, so did the Son when he wedded our human nature. But, for the redemptive work of our Savior it was necessary that the human nature should pass through the state of humiliation while here on earth. So the human nature had communicated to it indeed the divine attributes, but ordinarily, except in working miracles, did not make use of these attributes, Phil. 2, 6 etc. This humiliation ended with Christ's burial. In the vivification on Easter morning the exaltation of the human nature began. For forty days the Lord showed himself in subdued glory to his disciples, and then formally ascended to heaven, and in accord with our text seated himself at the Father's right hand, to rule also according to his human nature, in divine power, majesty, and glory over the whole world of creation. Spurgeon misinterprets badly when he makes the sitting at God's right a rest for Christ: "His work is done, and he may sit, . . .

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he may therefore quietly wait. . . . In this sitting he is our representative. . . . While we see our Lord and representative sitting in quiet expectancy, we, too, may sit in the attitude of peaceful assurance." No, not thus is Jesus sitting. Strange to say, in the next breath Spurgeon himself contradicts these words, for he makes Christ reign on his heavenly throne. Yet this reigning does not come to view properly in Spurgeon's comment, since he is mingling two contradictory ideas. All the Reformed theology denies omnipotence to Jesus' human nature, even to his glorified human nature, and so it blinds itself to the royal rule of our exalted Lord and King which now he exercises to the full extent according to both of his natures.

What helps to mislead Spurgeon is Yahveh's word: **until I make thine enemies thy footstool.** He reads them as if Jehovah alone is active, and Christ inactive, while Jehovah does this work for him. Now Ps. 2, 9 already says: "Thou," the Messiah-King, "shalt break them with a rod of iron," namely the heathen: "thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." That does not sound like quiet waiting. We have long known that the *opera ad extra sunt indivisa*. All the persons of the Godhead share in them. So the Father may indeed lay the Messiah's enemies low, and the thing truly is his work. Yet the Son, the Godman, shares in this work, he smashes his foes with a rod of iron. The Father works through the Son and through the Spirit. That indeed is true, of the omnipotent Father, however, just as well as of the omnipotent human nature of the Son, that this laying low of the enemies requires no strain and breathless effort. God sits and laughs at the raging kings of the earth and the violent hosts of men and devils that assail his Son's kingdom. It is play for omnipotence to overthrow these pigmies. The sitting, however, does not intimate this, just as the Messiah's rising, wielding his omnipotent rod, going forth to battle,

etc., does not contradict this ease with which his enemies are conquered. These human expressions must never be pressed and taken by themselves, but must always be kept in proper balance, and be taken conjointly. — It is altogether anthropomorphic to say that Jehovah will **make thine enemies thy footstool**, compare Josh. 10, 24. So conquering kings showed their triumph by placing a foot upon the neck of some other conquered king. The figure is here extended to include all of the Messiah's enemies, and is in accord with the idea of a "footstool" to match the Messiah's sitting, at the same time conveying the idea of permanent triumph by means of "footstool." Delitzsch writes: "Temporal history shall end with the triumph of good over evil, but not with the annihilation of evil, but with its subjugation. To this it will come, when absolute omnipotence for and through the exalted Christ shows its effectiveness."

In v. 2 David speaks, and that prophetically, stating the coming result of the exaltation of the human nature of the Messiah: **The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion.** This "rod," *matteh*, is the Messiah's royal scepter, *Herrscherstab*, as Koenig rightly puts it for our Psalm, both the symbol of his rule, and at the same time the means of his actual rule. We must not read the words as though Jehovah will send this scepter out of Zion on into heaven for the Messiah's rule. "Zion" is the seat of the Messiah's throne, Ps. 2, 6, but for the exalted Messiah this is the "Zion" above, "the holy city, new Jerusalem" which will eventually come down out of heaven upon the new earth, Rev. 21, 2. From this royal capital of the King his scepter shall be wielded. **The rod of his strength** or might combines the symbol and instrument with the power which really effects the work. And here *Yahveh* is said to **send** the rod out of Zion. It is the same thought as in line two of the former verse: Jehovah made the agent. That this

signifies no exclusion of the Messiah-King is seen already in the expression "the rod of *thy* strength." — But this is entirely plain when David now adds Jehovah's own words regarding the omnipotent rule of the Messiah's scepter. Again he addresses the King: **Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.** So Jehovah's sending the rod is the ruling of the King himself. Going back to v. 1: the laying low under the King's feet all his enemies by Jehovah is the King's own rule conquering them. When a moment ago we read "out of Zion" no bounds were announced for the "rod" or scepter. Here we see now how far the King's "strength" reaches: into the very "midst of his enemies." The idea is that if it penetrates that far and maintains itself there, it extends over all his enemies. If the citadel itself falls, the stronghold is entirely conquered. When the headquarters of a general is taken his entire army is disrupted and overthrown. This rule of our heavenly King "in the midst of his enemies" is displayed in countless striking ways. They plan some vicious move against Christ and imagine they will win; when, lo, they foolishly play into his hands and actually, against their own will, help to further his cause. A constant application for us now is that we should never fear even the greatest numbers and hostile forces of Christ's enemies, because in their very midst, overshadowing all their power, plans, and rage, our own heavenly King rules, carrying out right among them all the wonderful plans he has designed.

3. **Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power
in the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning:
thou hast the dew of thy youth.**
4. **The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent,
Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.**

In v. 3 the best authorities agree that the main incision must be made at the end of the first line. Thus the two phrases in the second line modify the verb in line three. — There is a contrast between v. 2 and 3. The former shows us the King in the midst of his enemies; the latter, in the midst of his people. He dominates his enemies; he leads his people. He meets his enemies with the rod of his strength; his people follow him of their own heart's desire. Nor is it so strange that we should first read of this King's throne, then of his enemies, and only after that of his people. Earthly kings are such because of their people, and these would be a people even without a king; but the Messiah-King depends for kingship on himself, and on no people. By his grace he creates himself a people; and this people would not be what they are without him as their King. These things must be constantly borne in mind. — Now the Psalm tells us neither how the Messiah King comes to have enemies, nor how he comes to have a people. The great topic of the Psalm is the Priest-King in his reign. Keeping to that we are shown how his people act **in the day of thy power**. The word translated "power" is *chayil*, power in the sense of *Heeresmacht*, army or military force. So by the day of the King's power is meant the day of battle when the King with his scepter and army crushes his enemies. — In that day the King's people shall be **willing**, only the Hebrew has the noun, and that in the plural, which here is the intensive: "altogether willingness." They will all be true volunteers. In fact he can use none other, and would never do so. Those writers who take "willingnesses" in the broad general sense, omitting the modifier: "in the day of thy power," make the word mean: "willing in believing, loving, obeying, adhering, living piously and justly in the world." This goes away beyond the text. The great willingness here spoken of means joyful readiness to fight

under the scepter and banner of their wonderful King. Let us abide by that. One thing may be noted, namely, besides the Hebrew plural, the use of the concrete term "willingnesses," which also adds to the forcefulness of the expression. Similarly in Ezek. 2, 8 the most rebellious are called rebellion itself. — The King's willing people rally around his banner in the day when he assembles his armies. We are now given a beautiful description of this host. It begins with the phrase: **in the beauties of holiness.** Koenig, following old authorities, thinks *hadre* has been corrupted and should read *harare*: "on the mountains of holiness," or: "on the holy mountains," probably because the plural of *hadar* is not found elsewhere. This reading would give excellent sense. But so does the Hebrew text as it stands. Delitzsch conceives of these "beauties" as priestly robes, festive priestly garments. But this interpretation clashes with the idea of an army in line one, and of "youth" in the sense of young men as enlisted in that army in line three. Delitzsch is happier in his reference to Rev. 19, 14: "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." These "beauties" consist of "holiness" in its different parts, the white robes of Christ's righteousness, and all the pure virtues that flow from pardon and forgiveness. — **From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth,** describes not the youthful freshness and brightness of the King, but of his army, for *yalduth* is a case where the abstract term "youth" is employed for the concrete "young men." Nor is "youth" here meant in a physical sense, but in the spiritual. Ordinary human armies are composed of young men up to a certain age limit. This basic idea is held fast here. Only in our King's army all believers are enlisted, irrespective of their physical age. Whatever that age may be, they have all been reborn to a life that does not age. In them all there is thus by grace the

beauty and virility of youth, spiritually. This great body of men, spiritually reborn to undying youth composes the King's host. — But a fine oriental figure is combined here with this conception of spiritual youth, namely that of the **dew from the womb of the morning**. The point of comparison with the dew is that of a *glistening multitude*. When the first light breaks the multitudinous dewdrops all glitter in the sun. That is how this King's army looks. Their garments and weapons all glisten and reflect the rays of light, sparkling in beauty. John Milton has the imperishable line in "Paradise Lost," V, line 745.

"Stars of morning, dewdrops which the sun impearls,"

Note in Rev. 7, 9: "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." Geo. Rawson has this stanza:

"Countless they shine, as dews from heaven
When eastern skies grow bright —
More glorious than those dews are given,
Sparkling in morning light." —

The figure, however, is extended to include the birth of the dew "from the womb of the morning," thus personifying the morning as a mother. So Thompson writes:

"The meek ey'd morn appears, mother of dews."

Job 38, 28 used this figure: "Hath the rain a father, or who hath begotten the drops of dew?" The apparent reason for this motherhood of the morning lies in the mystery connected with the production of dew. It is always viewed as not due to men, but to God, i. e. working wonderfully in nature. Read Micah 5, 7: "The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for

the sons of men." When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus of the mystery of spiritual birth he used the figure of the wind, John 3, 7-8. It is the same idea as in the morning and the dew, namely a marvel of nature. This pictures the birth of the spiritual hosts of the Lord. And this host of spiritual "soldiers of the cross" surrounds our King in the day of mobilization and battle. Who shall be able with the weapons of darkness to stand against them?

**4. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent,
Thou art a priest for ever after the order
of Melchizedek.**

V. 4 is a parallel to v. 1. The latter states the royal exaltation of David's Lord, the former his priestly exaltation, and both statements are given in Yahveh's own words. Just as the royal exaltation is introduced abruptly, and thus in a striking way, with no preamble, so also the priestly exaltation. The difference is that whereas the kingship is further elaborated, the priesthood is fully stated and no more is added. Delitzsch thinks "the beauties of holiness" signify priestly robes and designate the people as themselves all priests. He thinks that this serves as an introduction to the priest commission of the Messiah. The King of this priestly people is himself *kohen*, Priest. The trouble is that "the beauties of holiness" occurs in a verse describing the armed force of the King, and thus of necessity must mean "beauties" connected with weapons and armor. So we read v. 4 like v. 1, both making a grand announcement with abruptness. — While v. 1 has only Yahveh's solemn declaration, v. 4 tells us: **The LORD hath sworn.** The exaltation of eternal kingship is given by command, the exaltation of eternal priesthood is given by an oath. One has well said that in regard to the latter there was more ceremony. Yet we need not press the difference. All we venture to say is that

when the Messiah was exalted as King this was at once combined with his sitting at Yahveh's right hand. The exaltation as Priest has no such accompanying act; its place is taken by Yahveh's oath. As the sitting at Yahveh's right hand guarantees the supreme exalted reign of the King, so, while in different manner, the oath guarantees the supreme and exalted office of Priest. As the sitting inaugurated the King in that office, so the oath inaugurated the Priest in this. The oath is the *n^{um}* raised to the highest degree. — What lies in the idea of the oath is brought out by the addition: **and will not repent.** The expression is strongly anthropomorphic, speaking of God after the manner of men. Yahveh will never change as if he regretted swearing the oath. Compare Heb. 6, 17: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath."

Now follows what Yahveh thus confirmed. To the exalted Messiah he swears: **Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.** It ought to go without saying that this is not merely acknowledging a fact as such, but is the inauguration of this Priest into his eternal office. He is to be this kind of a priest. When Kessler tries to persuade us that **priest** here means simply priest, and not high priest, he has the Epistle to the Hebrews dead against him, where our passage is repeatedly used, and even fully explained in chapter seven. There Christ is spoken of on the basis of our passage throughout as High Priest. Riegenbach rightly says that it is self-evident when a king is inaugurated as priest, he is made head-priest, and not something less. — Likewise the function of this priesthood dare not be lowered to mean merely Christ's intercession; he is Priest in the supreme sense. Aaron used animal blood in purging the people from sin. This act therefore had to be repeated by a long succession of high priests. But this eternal

High Priest offered up his own blood, and thus established an eternal redemption and atonement. While the intercession is included in the priestly function, while Christ is our Advocate with the Father, this part of his priestly work rests on the sacrifice of his atoning blood offered as a propitiation to the Father, 1 John 2, 1. Now Christ exercised a high priesthood in his state of humiliation. Our Psalm does not speak of that. It speaks of the exaltation and the inauguration of the heavenly priesthood of Christ. Yet this rests on the other. Because Christ in his humiliation so perfectly fulfilled his priesthood, therefore when he was exalted he was made a High Priest for ever. — The latter, namely that he was by divine oath instated as priest **for ever**, *l'etolam*, is elucidated by the addition: **after the order of Melchizedek**. The priesthood of Aaron and his successors was temporal, and has ended long ago. Christ's priesthood is after an entirely different order. It is for ever, and the type of this different, higher, unchanging priesthood is Melchizedek, not Aaron or the Levitical priesthood. — The point is made that Christ was at the same time King and Priest. So was the mysterious Melchizedek, king of Salem (Jerusalem), and priest, both in one person. This already is exceptional, different from Aaron. A priest who is at the same time king stands far above a priest like Aaron or any of his successors. Kittel tries to break this down by pointing to a few priestlike functions exercised by Jewish kings. His effort goes to pieces on the flinty fact, which stands out in the entire history of the Jewish kings, that the high priesthood in Israel was never combined with the kingship. No king entered into the Holy of holies to offer the blood atonement. It is only Melchizedek, king of Salem, who is also priest, and as such recognized by no less a person than Abraham. Any priestly feature in the kingship of Israel was a minor affair. No king in

Israel, not even David, the type of Christ, ever had share in the tithes, which belonged wholly to the tribe of Levi; yet Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, and Levi, still in the loins of Abraham, thus, as Hebrews points out, also paid tithes to this exceptional priest. — But there are still higher considerations which elevate Melchizedek above all other priests and make him a type of the Messiah-Priest whose priesthood is one, without succession, and everlasting. Melchizedek has no father or mother, i. e. none are mentioned in Scripture. That means that he appears in the sacred record not as one who inherited his priesthood. So he has neither beginning nor end, i. e. neither his birth or his death is recorded in Scripture. The priesthood is wholly connected with his person alone. As he got it not from his father, so he did not pass it on to a son or successor. It is a priesthood altogether exceptional. As such it stands in Scripture an unvaried, unchanging thing. Melchizedek indeed passed from this life, but Scripture leaves this priestly figure as one fixed for ever. In all these points Melchizedek was a true and remarkable type of the coming Messiah-Priest. Carefully read Hebrews 7, and if possible study Riegenbach's exposition of this chapter, which is the best so far written; it is in Zahn's commentary on the New Testament. Jesus was not even of the tribe of Levi, but of the tribe of Judah, "of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." Jesus is made a Priest not by law like Aaron, but after the power of an endless life. The law and commandment could not bring in the better hope; hence the law was dismantled when this Priest came with the better hope. The very oath inaugurating Christ as Priest put him above the Levitical priests as of a different and higher order. Those were many priests, by their very succession proclaiming their inferiority; this Priest saves to the uttermost. And so we conclude: "Such a High Priest became us, who is holy,

harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. . . . The word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." Heb. 7, 26 and 28. "Thus far the prophet mightily prophesied, both concerning the kingdom of Christ, his Son and yet also true Lord and God, and of his people; now he goes on, and is not satisfied that he has made him King and Lord over all, but makes him also a Priest and pope (if you permit that I use this word of this person). For since we have heard above, that this King is to have a new people, so also for such a people he must have a new priest office wherewith he rule them in the conscience and as towards God; since it is a kingdom and people of God, there must be a priesthood and worship, that the people be shown God's Word and will, one that acts between God and them, and thus he gives to the one Christ both offices, that he be the eternal King and also the eternal Priest." Luther.

SUGGESTIONS

The text on its surface has two outstanding pictures of Christ: the King, and the Priest. The homiletical problem is to find a unity that when actually divided will fall apart into these two. Now the thing is not done by just pasting the two pictures together, and then making each one a part, say in this fashion: Christ our Ascended King and Priest: I. King; II. Priest. Even attaching some modifier or other to King and Priest will not do the thing. A theme like this is an illusion, a mere formality, although we are sorry to say that sermons are still printed with such pretended themes, to say nothing of being preached. There are quite a few texts which at a glance show two or more parts that might be used, but do not show so readily the unity covering those parts. The problem is to find the true unity; and the only alternative should be some other division, using other proper parts. — Here the unity is not "sitting at God's right hand," so that we could split: first as King; secondly as Priest. For "the right hand" is the omnipotence and majesty, and "sitting" is the exercise of these,

the whole expression pertaining thus only to the King, not at all to the Priest. — A real unity is secured in the idea of exaltation, for Christ in his exaltation was made by God both an eternal King, and a Priest for ever. This is simple, but correct, and may be embellished in the wording of theme and parts, i. e., in the formulation. The outline might run thus:

David Describes the Exaltation of Our Ascended Lord.

- I. *As the eternal King at God's Right Hand.*
- II. *As the eternal High Priest like Melchizedek.*

One of the good points in an outline like this for the present festival is that it names the divine act we celebrate, viz.: the Ascension. Another is that both parts contain good color from the text. — But there are other ways of reaching a unity for these two parts, King and Priest. The text speaks of the Lord's people. So we may reach a unity by means of the people. We belong to them. That enables us to add a personal touch, which is good in formulating outlines.

How Shall We, as the Lord's People, Honor Him on this Day of His Ascension?

- I. *As our almighty King seated at God's right hand.*
- II. *As our eternal High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.*

Or we outline like this:

Ascension Day our Savior's Inauguration Day.

- I. *We acclaim him as our victorious King.*
- II. *We honor him as our unchanging High Priest.*

Gerok has an outline that is suggestive, since he combines the kingship and priesthood:

Christ, the Eternal King and High Priest.

- I. *The glorious enthronement.*
- II. *The divine decree connected therewith.*
- III. *The host of his people.*
- IV. *His inward priestly rule.*
- V. *His outward glorious victory.*

The formulation may be improved somewhat, though the general idea is a good one.

While the text on its surface has the two grand ideas of kingship and priesthood, it is easy to see that there are other elements in it; for one thing the enemies in whose midst Christ rules and who are made his footstool (completely conquered); then, too, his people, a host forever spiritually young, born wonderfully, clothed and armed gloriously, rallying around his banner for the battle. The thought, too, is obvious, connecting Christ's priesthood with his kingship, that this people of the King are made his people by means of his eternal priesthood. This opens up the full richness of the text, and certainly invites to a variety of excellent formulations. Now, too, we may break away from the simple analytical form, and use some of the richer variety offered by synthetical arrangement.

Why we Worship Christ To-day as our King and Priest.

- I. Because he has made us his people.*
- II. Because he decks us with the beauties of holiness.*
- III. Because he leads us against his enemies.*
- IV. Because he makes us share his eternal victory and triumph.*

The striking expressions in the text may invite the preacher's skill in arranging an outline. Thus "thine enemies thy footstool," "the beauties of holiness," "the morning" and "the dew," and "the order of Melchizedek." Let us try the first of these: For the great day of Ascension, David shows us our exalted Savior on the throne of his power and majesty. It is a picture of

The King and His Footstool.

- I. Instead of the morning dew — enmity.*
- II. Instead of the beauties of holiness — the rod.*
- III. Instead of willingness in the day of the Lord's power — tragedy and defeat.*
- IV. Instead of a glorious example — a terrible warning.*

In the first two parts Christ's priestly work should be brought to view; in the third his royal work; in the fourth the deduction is drawn.

EXAUDI

Psalm 42

On Exaudi as the Sunday of Expectation see the introduction to this cycle prefaced to Rogate. The choice of this text is thus justified. It expresses the soul's longing for God in ungodly surroundings. Longing for Exaudi, complete satisfaction for Pentecost. — Psalm 42 and Psalm 43 belong together, either as one hymn, or the latter a continuation of the former. — A number of Psalms in the second book of the Psalter bear the superscription: "for the sons of Korah," the *lamed* being translated "for," i. e. the sign of the dative. This would mean that the Psalm was *dedicated* to the sons of Korah. But this translation may well be questioned. *Lamed* is often used as the sign of the genitive, denoting possession, thus: "of the sons of Korah," denoting *authorship*. The sons of Korah belonged to a prominent Levitical family descended from Korah, who for his rebellion was swallowed up by the opening earth. Very likely several of these descendants in David's time were poets. Their compositions may have circulated as a separate collection, afterwards embodied in the Psalter.

1. **As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
so panteth my soul after thee, O God.**
2. **My soul thirsteth for God, for the living
God:
when shall I come and appear before God?**
3. **My tears have been my meat day and night,
while they continually say unto me, Where
is thy God?**

4. When I remember these *things*, I pour out
my soul in me:
for I had gone with the multitude, I went
with them to the house of God,
with the voice of joy and praise, with a
multitude that kept holy day.

A beautiful comparison opens up this Song of Longing: **As the hart panteth after the water brooks.** 'Ayyal is a species of deer, and is here construed with a feminine verb, and should really be rendered "hind," not "hart." Terms for animals may be either gender. The feminine is here used, it seems, because of the following *nephesh*, "soul," which is feminine. The comparison thus is very close, a simile approaching metaphor, the 'ayyal representing the soul of the poet. — The verb 'arag means "to long," *desiderare*, and is picturesquely rendered here: **panteth**. Consumed with burning thirst the hind longs **after the water brooks**, *mayim*, "water," being added to 'aphiqe, "course" or "river bed," to distinguish the bed filled with water from one that is dry. The thirsting hind, a picture of the human soul, yearns with intense longing for a brook filled with water where she may quench her thirst. The Hebrew accentuation bids us translate: "As the hind which panteth after the water brooks"; and not: "As the hind panteth." And properly, for the comparison lies between such a hind and the soul, not between the acts of panting or yearning. — Now the other member of the comparison: **so panteth my soul after thee, O God.** What the water is to the hind, God is to the soul. Note well, however, that the hind knows the water and thus her need of it; so this soul knows God and its need of him. Caught in the parching heat of summer with the usual drinking places all dry and dusty, the hind knows not whither to go and suffers great distress. So this soul debarred from public

worship in a land filled with godless, mocking men, cannot find the refreshment it must have and suffers intense distress. Ease, pleasure, honor, wealth, or other joys cannot satisfy the thirst for God. Here the title *'Elohim*, God, is used, not *Yahveh*, LORD. In a moment we shall see why. It is worth noting that for the hind we have the preposition *'al*, but for the soul the preposition *'el*, for the hind has the water brooks beneath, the soul its God above.

V. 2 amplifies the thought which is expressed very simply in v. 1. First the verb is new, a synonym: My soul **thirsteth** for God, *tsama'*. The repetition intensifies, the new verb makes clearer and fuller. — But now the apposition is added: **for the living God**, *l'el chay*. Because the soul longs for spiritual life, and thus for “the living God,” we have *'Elohim* and *'El*, and not *Yahveh*, as the proper term. There may be a covert comparison here with living water, i. e. water that flows and is thus purer than stagnant pools. But whether that is the case or not God is viewed in the Scriptures throughout as the one source of life, in particular also of spiritual life, i. e. the fountain of grace for the sinful soul. And as our spiritual life originally comes from him, so it is constantly replenished, fed, and kept alive in us by the life that flows from him. The means for implanting and after that feeding our life is Word and Sacrament, themselves for this reason called living water. If the inflow into us from God is stopped our spiritual life dries up. That is why the devil is so bent on getting some means or other, any will serve his purpose, for cutting us off from the means of grace, Word and Sacrament, God's channels for feeding our life. — In dramatic fashion the soul's panting and yearning is now given voice: **when shall I come and appear before God?** i. e. to refresh and fill my soul with life from him. If the verb is read as *kal*, it would be: “see God.” It is useless to urge against this reading that the

Scriptures tell us that no man can see God and live, Ex. 33, 20, for in a way we can indeed see him, as the Scriptures also state. Some old texts and other authorities read the kal. If the niph'al is read we have: "appear before God," *ph^ene* being the accusative of place. Though it is hard to decide, the niph'al is probably correct, since the poet, as the further context shows, has in mind the festive gatherings in the sanctuary at Jerusalem. He can hardly wait until he will stand again in the Lord's courts and thus in the presence of God, where streams of grace flow so abundantly for his soul. Shut off from that worship, in a strange land, among the ungodly scoffers, his soul is in exile, far from home, homesick.

V. 3 and 4 show what makes the poet's longing so poignant. Both are negative in thought; they point to a great void. V. 3 shows the poet alone, with no fellow believers around him, nothing but heathen scoffers. And v. 4 adds the recollection of what the poet once had and enjoyed, and now misses so sadly. The two belong together, not only in pointing to the void that cries for filling, but also in this that where once the poet was in the happy throngs at the festival worship in Jerusalem, he is now among heathen mockers of his God. Note how concretely, and thus vividly, the description is made. No hazy abstractions or generalizations here. — **My tears have been my meat day and night**, means that the singer felt like weeping all the time, and actually did weep, so that he had no appetite to eat. Great grief and sorrow always kill the desire for food. *Dim'athi*, a singular, is collective for "tears." Here the expression is strong and vivid in that tears are pictured as his *lechem*, "bread" or food. — This great sorrow has its specific cause: **while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?** really: "with their saying to me." 'Emor is the infinitive used as a noun, here with *b^e*, and its subject is understood, namely they who do so

say. And they do it "all the day," i. e. **continually**, every chance they get, so that the mocking question sounds constantly in the Psalmist's thoughts. — The question, **Where is thy God?** is evidently only a brief summary of the scoffing remarks made at every turn. Its meaning is plain: 'Elohim, in whom you trust as a living God, to whom you pray and cry, seems powerless to respond to you and help you. You say, he is the only real God, and our idols are nothing; then why does he not prove it? Back of the question lies the old pagan notion that every country has its own god, whose power is confined to that country. So these scoffers intimate that Elohim is not here in their country, but far away in Jerusalem, and there is no use to cry unto him here or to render worship here. This reproach, "Where is thy God?" always cut deeply into the hearts of the Israelites, as one can see in Ps. 79, 10; 115, 2; Micah 7, 10; and other passages. There is an echo of this reproach even from Jewish lips under Christ's cross, Matth. 27, 43, for in effect these Jewish mockers fling at Christ the sneer: Where is thy God? i. e. since you claim to be his Son. The question is intended to destroy faith. And its insidious power must not be underestimated. For often enough God seems to be silent and to leave himself unattested, which swells the assurance of his enemies, and tries faith the more sorely. Sibber puts the question into this modern form: "You are one of God's darlings; you are one that thought nobody served God but you, you are one that will go alone — *your* God! So this is an ordinary reproach, an ordinary taunt for wicked men to cast at the best people, especially when they are in misery. What is become of your profession now? What is become of your forwardness and strictness now? What is become of your God that you bragged of so, and thought yourselves so happy in, as if he had been nobody's God but yours? We may learn hence the disposition of wicked men. It

is a character of a venomous, cursed disposition to upbraid a man with his religion."

V. 4 shows how deeply the Psalmist is wounded by this reproach, more deeply even than these scoffers can know. This is because of the glaring contrast between the crowd of these scoffers and their mockery now, and the glorious experiences of the Psalmist among his own people in his home land in the days past. — First the expression of his deep pain: **When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me.** 'Elleh is neuter, "these" (things), but refers not to the preceding, but to the following, namely his going to the house of God, etc. The two verbs are lengthened imperfects, and are hortative, the one from *zakar*, the other from *shaphak*, and thus convey that the Psalmist gives himself fully and purposely to this remembering and the consequent pouring out of his soul. One might translate: "I must remember," etc. "To pour out the soul" is a strong expression for telling what fills the heart. But the Psalmist had no friend or likeminded person to whom he could unbosom himself, so he says: **I pour out my soul in me.** His lament and complaint is uttered only in his thoughts, silently. Delitzsch draws attention to the differentiation between "I" and "my soul," and finely treats of this distinction in his *Bibl. Psychologie*, p. 152 etc. The "I" possesses the soul, or *nephesh*, hence "my soul," the one I own. Surcharged with painful feelings, the ego lets the soul put them into thoughts, and feels constrained to make the soul stop there. If the soul were to utter them aloud before these scoffers, it would receive only additional mockery. Who has not had similar experience in pouring out the soul inwardly, especially with distressful thoughts which we could not confide to others, telling them now in one form, now in another to our own selves? To unburden the soul to a sympathetic friend is relief; to pour out the soul only within is added distress.

The Psalmist thinks of the happy days in the past when as a Levite he had his place in the great festivities at Jerusalem: **for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God.** What a satisfaction and joy that was to his soul! Now he is alone, surrounded by people who scoff at his God. The term *sak*, used here only, must mean a press of people, "multitude." There everybody went to the worship, here there would be none near the Psalmist to go. The verb 'abar, here the imperfect, is of customary action: "I had gone," or better: "I used to march along." The second verb 'eddaddem, "I went," is unusual, see Koenig, *Woerterbuch*, under *davah* II, usually read as *hithpael* or *hithpalel*, but because intransitive hardly matching the suffix "them," an accusative. Perhaps it is better to read it as a transitive *piel*: "I led them," for the Psalmist as a Levite or priest was among the leaders in the festive processions. Where he now lived there was no one to lead. They all went to **the house of God**, the tabernacle in Jerusalem. There they met God, their worship was exalted and beautiful communion with him, and their souls were filled with spiritual satisfaction. All this was only a memory now. — **With the voice of joy and praise** describes the feelings of the festive multitude which the Psalmist shared to the full. The "joy," *rinnah*, is really jubilation, joy expressed vocally, as also *qol*, "voice," indicates. This jubilation was produced by the glad event celebrated in the festival, and by the act of celebration itself. *Thodah* is "praise" in the sense of acknowledgment. God's grace etc. was duly acknowledged in fitting words, some Psalm perhaps, or several, or other vocal expression of worship. What a delight to join with so many in jubilant songs in the courts of the Lord! All is dead and still where the Psalmist now is. — The thought of the crowds at the festivals, which were a special delight to the Psalmist, is repeated at

the end: **with a multitude that kept holy day.** It takes all these words to translate *hamon chogeg* in the Hebrew. *Hamon* is an excited, moving, lively multitude of people, and such were these festive crowds. The word is in simple apposition to the suffix in *'eddaddem*; and *chogeg* means to circle about or dance, and generalized to celebrate a festival. So we might translate: "with the celebrating crowd." What a joy to be one of them; now there was no sign of any such thing.

Now the comforting refrain:

- 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and
why art thou disquieted in me?
hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him
for the help of his countenance (and my
God).**

This refrain is repeated at the end of our Psalm and at the end of Ps. 43. Thus it gets tremendous weight and force. It is really the Psalmist's answer to his own distress. Here the singer talks to his own soul, as if he and his soul were two persons. Yet this is not strange, since one often speaks to himself in matters far less important. Even the Gentiles accuse and excuse themselves, as if prosecutor and advocate were arguing the case before the court of conscience. But those interpretations of v. 5 are wrong which try to view the singer's distress as really without cause, as due only to "self-ignorance," "a mist of ignorance," making out of trifles monsters, as Spurgeon has done. No; this distress is not causeless, it is justified; not due to trifles, but to real and great trials and afflictions of faith. Equally wrong is the view that the singer's distress was a mere case of the dumps, as Trapp followed by Spurgeon tries to tell us, and the latter even calls the singer's distress "chicken-hearted melancholy." No; the Psalmist was not suffering from the blues. He had the fullest rea-

son for feeling and singing as he does. Real and proper distress is here relieved by real and proper comfort. Justifiable sorrow is overcome by comfort still more justified. It is another case like that in Psalm 23, where death is not a mere shadow, as interpreters pervert, but the proof and sign of death's actual nearness, and where the Lord's comfort actually delivers from death, and not merely from a shadow at which one is foolishly frightened. So here: the very real causes of distress are met by the equally real comfort which in this case the singer applies to himself. Nor is the remark of Delitzsch, quoted by others, really correct: "The spiritual man hushes the natural man." For v. 1-4 is by no means the voice of the natural man. — In the question: **Why art thou cast down, O my soul?** the verb *thisthochachi* is the *hithpael* from *shachach*, "to bow down deeply," as one who mourns, sits on the ground and bends down forward. The picture of the soul in this attitude is very concrete. — The other member of the question: **and art thou disquieted in me?** has the verb *hamah*, "to groan," as when one utters low, dull sounds. This groaning is the consequence of being bowed so low. But the implication in these questions is by no means that the soul is foolish to act thus, and that it has no reason to do so. Nor is the implication that the soul has lost its hold and comfort, at least forgotten it for the time being. How could the singer himself apply that comfort to himself if he had lost or forgotten it? And why this real medicine if the ailment were merely imaginary? No; these questions are the preamble to the comfort. They bid the singer's soul look at the real and great causes which work his distress, to view them and their bad effect in all their reality and greatness,—this is the force of *mah*, "why" — in order that the full and real comfort may equally impress itself upon the soul. — **Hope thou in God**, the *hiphil* imperative feminine *hochili*, from

yachal, really signifying "wait thou" (*nephesh*, feminine, "soul"), the German *harre*; whence the consoling hymn: *Harre, meine Seele, harre des Herrn, etc.* To wait on God is not to ignore the causes of our distress, but after looking at them and like the Psalmist recognizing them completely, to look from them to God and see what he will do to counteract them. — And that he will. How, when, by what means, this brief refrain does not attempt to state. Nor is that the real point of the comfort. God often works so wondrously that it is better for us not to know the details in advance, lest we doubt because they seem so strange. It is enough for us to wait on the Lord, leaving the matter wholly to him, with the sure knowledge and faith that "hope maketh not ashamed." — So the next step after waiting on God is the expectation that presently we shall praise him: **for I shall yet praise him**, the verb from *yadah*, by acknowledging the wonderful, gracious and blessed thing he will do. This fact stands unshakable for faith. When Spurgeon writes: "He who can use such heroic language in his gloomy hours will surely conquer," he badly misses the point, for he who uses this language, as the Psalmist does, is conquering right then and there. — An apposition follows attached to "him," the suffix of the verb: **the help of his countenance**. The *yeshu'oth* here meant is deliverance or help from the Psalmist's distressing situation among heathen scoffers, restoring him to his home-land, the sanctuary, and the fellowship of his own believing people. — The massoretic text, and our version which follows it, stops here. The refrain in v. 11 and at the end of Psalm 43 adds: **and my God**. The LXX and the Syrian version have this ending in our verse also. How the massoretic text dropped it is easy to understand, for our verse ending with *velohay* and v. 6 beginning with *'Elohay*, one of these might easily be omitted in copying. The

line itself also seems to require something, *hat keinen rechten Schlussfall*, as Delitzsch puts it. In the conclusion: "and my God," the Psalmist voices the fulness of his faith in one word: he who will show his might graciously in my favor, him will he praise. So he bids his soul rest in assured hope, and amid all the present attacks on his faith and amid the lack of the public enjoyment of his faith, he flees to this sure refuge.

In verses 6-10 the singer once more describes his spiritual distress, but now he weaves through the description the comfort he has brought back to his soul in v. 5. And so v. 11 brings the refrain not as a mere repetition of v. 5, but with the added force of the promises recalled in v. 8.

6. **O my God, my soul is cast down within me;
therefore will I remember thee
from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites,
from the hill Mizar.**
7. **Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of the
waterspouts:
all thy waves and thy billows are gone
over me.**
8. **Yet the LORD will command his loving-kindness
in the daytime,
and in the night his song shall be with me,
and my prayer unto the God of my life.**
9. **I will say unto God my rock, Why hast
thou forgotten me?
why go I mourning because of the oppression
of the enemy?**
10. **As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies
reproach me;
while they say daily unto me, Where is
thy God?**

In v. 5 the question: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" presupposes that the singer's soul is cast down, though the question intends to lift the soul up again. What v. 5 implied, is now stated in so many words: **O my God, my soul is cast down within me**, using the same verb as before: "bowed down deeply." He fully acknowledges his depression. It is real enough. And yet he tells this to God. It is as if he is now casting his depression upon God in hope, thus obeying his own injunction: "hope thou in God." — This comes out clearly in the deduction he draws from his depression. He does not supinely yield to his soul's distress, but since it weighs him down he turns to his God: **therefore will I remember thee**, and the imperfect of the verb *zakar* denotes continuous remembering. There is a correspondence between "within *me*" at the head of the line with "remember thee" at the end of the line. The conjunction '*al-ken*' makes the distress the cause, and the remembering the result: "therefore," or: "hence." In other words: the singer's pain makes him think of God. He is heeding his own admonition in v. 5. — And now the place is mentioned. In spite of *athnach* in the Hebrew, which divides: **from the land of Jordan**, and the following: **and of the Hermonites**, the two must be read together. The wrong accent is due to the wrong supposition that the Hermonites are a second object of the verb "I will remember." This has caused the curious comments of Spurgeon and others, as though the poet were recalling happy hours of remembrance in three different places, and one of these, the hill Mizar, some suppose to be near Mt. Sinai. The poet is living in the Gentile land beyond Jordan, i. e. east of the river, and far to the north. "From the land of Jordan" might by itself mean either side of the river and any place along its course. Hence the closer designation: "and of the Hermonites," or of the Her-

mons. This is the Antilibanus ridge of Hermon, plural most likely as we use the Alleghenies, the Rockies, etc. — This is the general locality of the poet's present residence. Hence he adds: **from the hill Mizar**, which should not be read: "from the little hill," as the margin of the A. V. has it. Some even try to make this little hill mean Mt. Zion, bungling the whole thought. Now it is unfortunate that we have no record of this hill called Mizar and its location, but that makes little difference. It must have been one of the hills or lower elevations along the lofty Hermon ridge. In a town on this hill the Psalmist lived, and from this place his memory kept recalling God. What he recalled is not stated, since v. 4 has already informed us, namely the festivals at Jerusalem which all centered in God and his gracious deeds for Israel.

V. 7 and 8 should be read together, and at once the reader will note that the thought is like that of v. 6, namely first the Psalmist's distress, then his turning to the Lord. And while we are on this subject, note that v. 9 and 10 reverse this order of thought, so that the prayer to God comes first and then the voicing of distress. And this is for an evident reason: the refrain, v. 11, should have immediately preceded it an expression of distress and sorrow. — Now that we know where the Psalmist lives at this time the imagery he uses in his lines appears very much in place. **Deep calleth unto deep**, one roaring river flood in that mountainous country to another, especially when fed by heavy rains. The singer uses *thohom*, a very strong word used for the chaos flood, or for the ocean, and then in general for floods and torrents. — The addition: **at the noise of thy waterspouts**, brings in the cataracts, *tsinnorim*, the falls, like the high falls at the Muzerib Lake, or the falls at the source of the Jordan. — But these impressive sights and sounds in nature react in their own way upon the downcast soul of the singer. It is a fine

psychologic touch. When one is down-hearted or sad even the sunshine is somehow viewed as aiding that sadness, say by mocking the sad soul with its very brightness; how much more then such phenomena as mountain floods and waterfalls? So in this case: **all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.** This is not simile, but metaphor. He does not say that his sorrow goes over his soul like these waves and billows; but as he looks at these waters he feels these very waters going over him. They are symbols of the hostility and mockery which pour over him, and against which he feels so helpless. He says *thy* waves, *thy* billows, which must be understood of those actual streams and falls as God's creation, not of the waves and billows of mockery, as though these were sent over him by God. Now as in v. 6 a the Psalmist expresses his distress as a preamble to his remembrance of God and his hope in him; so here v. 7 with its vivid picture of distress is the prelude to v. 8 with its trustful turning to the Lord. **Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime,** his *chesed* or grace and favor, as one sends out a messenger. The singer means that the Lord will send this messenger, namely his word of grace, to him to comfort and uphold him. Here the title is *Yahveh*, and not *'Elohim* as otherwise in the Psalm. This has caused much comment, some even wishing to cancel the verse as spurious. They also object that this stanza is a tristich (three lines), where all the rest are distichs (two lines), though even Driver says: "The finest and most perfect specimens of Hebrew poetry are . . . those in which the parallelism is most complete . . . varied by an occasional tristich." In the *Elohim* Psalms of this second book of the Psalter *Yahveh* does appear again and again; our Psalm is an instance. Nor is it hard to see why in some connections the singer preferred *Yahveh*; in our passage, for instance, this title goes exceedingly well with *chesed*, namely undeserved

favor. The verb *y^etsavveh*, the piel of *tsavah*, should be translated neither as past nor as future, but as present: "The Lord commands." — The position of the time modifiers should be noted. In the translation they appear placed chiasmically, "in the daytime" at the end of line one, and "in the night" at the head of line two; but the Hebrew has both modifiers each at the head of its line. Together they convey the idea of continuity, as much as to say: always the Lord does this. — In the second line: **in the night his song with me** is generally read of the Psalmist's song, and then a copula is supplied, either "shall be," if the thought is conceived as future, or "is" if present. But "his song" is not the song concerning him, the theme of which is the Lord; "his song" is the song caused by him, its theme not further indicated in this line. "His" is the subjective, not the objective genitive. And the verb in line one governs "his song." Note the correspondence between "his lovingkindness" and "his song," the latter the product of the former. When the Lord orders his grace to bless us in the daytime, he will produce a song in our hearts in the nighttime. Observe, too, that these two lines in v. 8 are the opposite of the sad plaint in line one of v. 3. — The Lord's song is now described by the apposition: **my prayer unto the God of my life**. This prayer is one of praise and thanksgiving. This is the kind of song the Psalmist means, namely a prayer-song, a praise-song. It is directed unto God, but unto him as he who by his grace shows himself as "the God of my life," which means: the God who does not abandon me unto death. — So the singer's soul is indeed cast down and suffers much; he admits it. But he is not abandoned unto this grief, the Lord's grace comes like a messenger to him, and in spite of everything fills him with a prayer of praise and song of thanksgiving.

V. 9-10 is read by Kessler as the contents of the prayer mentioned in v. 8. We have already seen

how 6 a and 6 b show the distress and the relief; likewise v. 7 the distress, v. 8 the relief. This is the case with v. 9 and 10, only the relief is first, the distress which it pertains to is second. This for the reason mentioned above. We have three parallels of thought, the third of which is in reverse order. V. 9 then looks forward to v. 10, not backward to the song and prayer of v. 8. In view of the distress described in v. 10 the singer, now following out his own injunction in the refrain (v. 5) to hope in God, says **unto God** whom he calls **my rock**, the unshakeable foundation of his faith and hope: **Why hast thou forgotten me?** "Rock" may be a genitive in the Hebrew, *Felsengott*, or a vocative, or an apposition to "God." The Hebrew punctuation favors the first construction, the old translations the third, so also our A. V. What the singer means by the question about God having forgotten him, he states in the parallel question: **why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?** He means to say: See how mournfully I must go all oppressed by the enemy — does that not look as if God had forgotten him? But that touch when God is called "my rock" already intimates, that while things may look like God forgetting, this really cannot be so. — And now in v. 10 in a very natural way "the oppression of the enemy" is once more described, first by stating the subjective effect of this oppression upon the singer's heart, and secondly by naming once more the objective cause producing this effect. V. 10 is thus quite like v. 3. *Retsach* is "crushing," *Zermalmung*; the verb *ratsach* means to kill by crushing. How the A. V. came to translate **sword** we do not know; it offers "killing" in the margin. The *b^e* = "in the manner of," and states an accompanying circumstance. In simple English the thought is that when these scoffers keep asking: "Where is thy God?" this question cuts with crushing

effect into his very bones. He feels it as a cruel smashing blow. The language is strong: **As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me.** How they do it is added: **while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?** It is this mocking question, hurled at the singer's faith, which is like smashing blows, a heavy oppression, and in its constant repetition such a burden as to make him feel often that God has actually forgotten him. — V. 6-10 thus interlaces the distress with the comfort.

Now follows the refrain: **Why art thou cast down, etc.** A curiosity in translation appears when in v. 5 *y^eshu'oth* is rendered "help," and the identical word in v. 11 translated "health." It means deliverance, namely rescue and the safety following rescue. While the words of the refrain are identical in both verses, each verse must be read in connection with what precedes. Thus v. 5 is the answer to v. 1-4: Distressed soul, go thou and hope in God! V. 11 similarly, only that v. 6-10 show that the soul though still deeply distressed is actually hoping in God. So v. 11 says: Distressed soul, go on hoping in God! — The preacher may well glance at Ps. 43 which really concludes Ps. 42. There the refrain appears again. Again read it with what precedes. Ps. 43, 1-4 shows the hope taking full possession of the singer's heart. So v. 5, the refrain, says: Distressed soul, hope on, thy hope shall be crowned!

SUGGESTIONS

Whether we take the outward division of the text as marked by the refrain, or the two great thoughts that appear in the text, the sermon will follow the same general lines:

The Godly Soul in an Ungodly World.

- I. *Its hurt and distress.*
- II. *Its hope and relief.*

Yet an outline like this is too matter-of-fact, especially when the text is a poem, arranged with high spiritual art and embellished with picturesque expressions. Surely, some of this beauty — homiletically called color — ought to show in the structure of the sermon. Thus the following will prove more attractive:

“Hope Thou in God!”

An admonition

- I. *For the soul that thirsteth after God.*
- II. *For the soul that prays, Why hast thou forgotten me?*
- III. *For the soul that is sure it will yet praise God.*

The preacher should have a clear conception of what he ought to preach from this text to his hearers. The text story is that one of the sons of Korah is compelled to live in a kind of exile far from Jerusalem and godly worshippers of Jehovah in a heathen country where he was viciously and constantly mocked for his religion and his God. This cast him down terribly, made him recall with poignant regret the past festive days of worship, made him feel forgotten of God, and made him pray most earnestly. Twice in the refrain the singer admonishes himself to hope in God, and assures himself that he will yet praise him. — We may apply this story to ourselves to-day hypothetically. We often do not appreciate our communion with God, the Word and Sacraments, the fellowship in worship, especially the festivals, etc. Suppose all this were taken away from us, then what? If everything were heathen, if we were always twitted and mocked about God, etc., then what? Let us prize what now is given us so richly to enjoy. — With these general ideas in mind the substance of the text may be worked over as follows: What Jerusalem and the sanctuary there meant for the ancient Jews; what the Church and the Word, Sacraments, and true worship should mean for us. Pentecost so near at hand should kindle our desire and love for these greatest spiritual blessings of God. Say with the Psalmist:

“My Soul Thirsteth for God, for the Living God.”

I. *How painful this thirst!*

- a) The lack. 1) Instead of the house of God only a memory. 2) Instead of the worshippers of God only scoffers. 3) Instead of spiritual food only a great emptiness.

- b) The pain. 1) The soul cast down. 2) The feeling of being forsaken. 3) The yearning prayer. 4) The hope reaching out.

II. How blessed the satisfaction!

- a) The water brooks running full.
- b) The fellowship in God's house.
- c) The help of God's countenance.
- d) The praise in your heart and on your lips.

PENTECOST

Ezek. 36, 22-28

The Pentecostal thought in the second half of this text is obvious at the first reading, but it will be found that the first half is the necessary preparation for the second half. In the days of Ezekiel Israel had profaned God's holy name before the heathen. It did this by compelling God to punish its sins by sending it into exile. Then the heathen mocked the name of the God whose people had thus become outcasts. That moved God to sanctify his name among the heathen by reinstating his people again in their own land and changing their hearts so that they would be his people and he their God. The return from the Babylonian exile was the beginning of this sanctification of God's name. The full extent of it, however, reaches into the Christian era. There were preliminary, and there were partial fulfillments of the prophecy concerning the new heart and the new life. For instance under Ezra and Nehemiah the people were greatly changed spiritually for the better. But the day came when Israel profaned God's holy name among the heathen by delivering up God's Son himself to a heathen governor for crucifixion. It was then that God signally glorified his name, not only in raising his Son from the dead and exalting him for ever, but in particular also by sending out his Holy Spirit and the saving power of the Gospel. Among the heathen far and near the Jews were converted, gathered into the kingdom of Christ, and served him with a new heart. Heathen converts joined them everywhere. And thus the glory of God's name was restored among the heathen, and that restoration continues to this

day. — The Holy Name of God is embodied in Christ. This name God sanctified by implanting it in true faith into the hearts of Jews and Gentiles. Pentecost starts and marks this divine work in a wonderful way. The glory of it is still with us as we celebrate the festival of the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit and thus on our part praise his Holy Name.

22. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. 23. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. 24. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

Therefore connects with v. 23. Because God has pity on his own name which has suffered shamefully among the heathen, he now gives the prophet this message: **say unto the house of Israel, etc.** Ezekiel lived in Mesopotamia on the banks of the river Chebar among the Judean exiles. See the introduction to The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, text Ez. 33, 10-16. The fact that God still calls these people "the house of Israel," the family and thus heirs of the patriarch to whom he had made his covenant promises, and that he sends them a direct message by his inspired prophet, is significant of grace in the midst of punishment. — The significant and weighty preamble: **Thus said the Lord GOD**, introduces what follows as words literally, actually God's own words. We need not ask how God communicated them to Ezekiel, for God never had the least difficulty in that regard. Nor did Ezekiel have the slightest doubt as to who was

communicating with him and what the words were. This is verbal Inspiration so plain and clear that no man can deny it except by open violence to the words themselves. The function of the prophet was merely to transmit the words conveyed to him. He might not understand them fully himself. That makes no difference. It still happens that many a message is conveyed which the messenger does not fully understand, perhaps understands not at all. Even the recipients of the divine message may have understood the message transmitted to them only to a degree and in part. The more necessary that the *ipsissima verba* should be conveyed as actually spoken by God. — Here God uses his title '*Adonay Yahveh*, for which our version constantly has **Lord GOD**, spelling the latter with capitals: the Ruler over all who is the covenant Lord, who thus backs up his words by his all-ruling power and lordship, and by his unchanging truth and grace. — The message following this solemn preamble is altogether in direct discourse, as if God were speaking face to face with his people: **I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel.** The verb '*asah*' is used here without an object, intransitively: "I am not acting for your sakes." The thing is to be absolutely clear from the very start, what God is determined to do, and will also actually do, is in no way due to anything meritorious in Israel. If God should consider Israel and weigh what Israel deserved he certainly would not do what he now declares he will do. As far, then, as Israel is concerned, all that God now utters is grace pure and simple. — Against this negative the positive is set in clean-cut contrast: **but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.** The divine *shem*, **name**, always denotes the revelation which the Lord GOD has made of himself. A great deal is gained in clearness and adequate perception when this simple definition is held fast. We know God only by his name,

i. e. revelation. See previous texts on this subject. God calls his name **holy**, and the opposite of what this means he charges against the Israelites who **profaned** this name among the heathen. Luther has well said: "God's name is holy in itself," and nothing can change or profane that holiness. In other words, all the revelation of God is in itself exactly like God, pure, spotless, without a trace of sin; and it will ever be thus. Now this holy name should be kept holy, or sanctified, by men. They ought to regard that name as just what it is. Luther has put it perfectly: "When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God also lead a holy life according to it. This grant us dear Father in heaven. But he that teaches and lives otherwise than God's Word teaches, profanes the name of God among us. From this preserve us, heavenly Father." The pure and true revelation of God ought to be preached and taught, i. e. spread among men, received by them in faith, and made the controlling power in their lives. That is sanctifying God's name. When the revelation we have of God is falsified, changed, perverted, and when such utterly false or partly false ideas concerning God are spread by preaching, teaching, and living, then God's name is profaned indeed. — Now how did Israel profane God's holy name among the heathen? The answer is given by God himself in v. 16-20. Israel became defiled with idolatry and blood, like the uncleanness of a removed woman. This, however, was still in their own land. But Israel carried its defilement so far that God had to scatter them in exile among the heathen. Then is when the Holy Name became profaned among the heathen. Israel itself caused God's revelation of himself to be badly falsified and shamefully perverted among the heathen. They came to speak derisively of Israel and of Israel's God: "These are the people of Jehovah" — as much as to say: Look at them, what a sorry lot they are! — "and

are gone forth out of his land" — as much as to say: This Lord cannot amount to much when he is unable to protect his own people! So Israel, by the punishment it compelled the Lord to inflict upon it, shamed the Lord's name among the heathen, darkened and falsified the truth, and made the Lord take steps to sanctify his Holy Name again before these very heathen. How he proposed to do this our text reports in detail. If it is a mighty serious thing to bring even an honorable man's name into ill repute. It is infinitely worse to bring the Holy Name of God into evil repute. If even an honorable man will take proper steps to safeguard the honor of his name, and rightly so, how much more must God not vindicate the honor of his Holy Name? Only bear in mind that God's Name and revelation of himself centers in his grace and in his work of grace. No man knows God aright, as he really is, and as he has revealed himself, if he does not know his grace and mercy.

So v. 23 reports: **And I will sanctify my great name**, and then adds once more: **which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them**. When God calls his name "great" he means that the attributes of which it is made up are great, namely his power and majesty, his righteousness and truth, his love and grace. Note that a double clause draws the most marked attention to the profanation of his name by Israel, the word "profaned" being repeated. Over against this profanation God sets his determination: **I will sanctify, qeddashthi**, piel, separate from profanation, here not merely declarative: declare holy; but by actual deed: make holy i. e. do that which will make his name stand out in its true glory before the eyes of those concerned. What this sanctifying means is at once clearly stated: **and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD**. God will make them know, i. e. realize it. He will do certain things which will have this great result. Israel

had done the opposite. They had made the heathen think falsely, and in a derogatory way of God, as if he were that kind of a wretched being, really no god at all. God will reverse this and nullify Israel's action. What we noted above that the supreme glory of God's Name is his grace, is here verified. For the heathen are to know not merely that he is God, namely supreme in power and majesty, but that he is **the LORD, Yahveh**, the unchanging God of grace whose promises are everlastingly sure. To make men realize that is truly to sanctify God. Israel should have so sanctified God, but did the very opposite.—The addition: **saith the Lord GOD**, literally: *Kunde Jehovahs*, utterance, or communication of Yahveh, seals the statement just made, as no mere opinion or assertion of Ezekiel, but as God's mouthpiece (verbal Inspiration). And the double title: '*Adonay Yahveh*, the Ruler of all and covenant Lord, ought to remove absolutely the last trace of doubt.—As the profanation is named twice, so also the sanctification. Only the first statement in v. 23: "I will sanctify," positively assures us that the thing will be finally accomplished, as also the result is positively stated: "the heathen shall know"; while the second statement, as the close of the verse: **when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes**, pictures the sanctification in its connection with the result, *b^c* with the infinitive. Two points also are added now: first this sanctifying shall be **in you**, namely Israel. For the Name and revelation in the title Yahveh is inseparably bound up with Israel. Because these two are welded together, and not merely because Israel profaned the Name, will God sanctify his Name in Israel, i. e. in what he will do before the eyes of the *goyim* with his people Israel. Secondly there is added: **before their eyes**. The heathen shall see what God will do. Whether also they will believe is not here stated. Even the former statement, that the heathen "shall know" that I am the

Lord, does not positively say that this shall be the knowledge of faith, although we may expect that in many cases it will be that.

We have heard so far the Lord's comprehensive statement: "I will sanctify," and the ultimate object: "the heathen shall know"; now the explanatory details. V. 24 shows the first step. **For** is simply *v^e*, "and." **I will take you from among the heathen** emphasizes the separation involved in sanctification; **and gather you out of all countries** carries the idea of separation a step farther by combining all those separated. This is then completed in the clause: **and will bring you into your own land**, where as one united people they shall live separate unto the Lord. God did bring Israel out of its captivity among the heathen into its own land, and there was also in those days a marked fulfillment of the prophecies of the next verses about the new heart and new spirit. This, however, is not the complete fulfillment. That began when Christ sent his Holy Spirit, and when the preaching of the Gospel gathered from many nations the Jewish believers into the Christian Church. Then, too, the heathen nations began to know that the Lord was God, multitudes joining the Jewish believers in the Church.

25. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh. 27. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

This is the spiritual part of God's sanctifying his Name, profaned by Israel, among the heathen. This

is how they shall realize that he is LORD, Yahveh, and keeps his covenant of grace. The profanation of the Name culminated, not in Israel's sins, but in Israel compelling God to visit judgment upon it and send it into heathen exile. The sanctification of the Name must then be the reverse, the judgment must be removed from Israel, and this can be done only by completely removing the sin. That then is the task God sets for himself in our text. It is a mighty task of grace. Think what all it involves, for instance in preparing a complete atonement for sin, and then in applying that atonement to the hearts of the people. But God will carry out this sanctification most wondrously. That in the end only the true Israel was thus sanctified, and that the rest were made a permanent sign of divine judgment and thus cast out all over the world among the nations till the great day of final judgment, makes no difference — God's sanctification was completed nevertheless. — **Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean,** means the cleansing in justification, which then shall be followed by a new life, v. 27. Keil unfortunately calls this sprinkling figurative; it was actual, first in the ceremonial lustrations under the old covenant, then in the sacramental lustration in the new covenant. The latter was ushered in by the Baptist who sprinkled many thousands during the year and a half of his herald ministry in Israel, and was followed by Jesus, who took up this baptism, John 3, 22; 4, 1-2, and afterwards instituted baptism for all nations, Matth. 28, 19; Mk. 16, 15. On the day of Pentecost 3,000 were baptized. Baptism is the beginning of sanctification. Compare Heb. 10, 22; Eph. 5, 26; Tit. 3, 5, where also the Holy Ghost is mentioned in connection with the sacrament. Baptism washes away all sin and guilt, "and ye shall be clean." Note that in Ezekiel's prophecy there is sprinkling indeed, but certainly no immersion. — While God's sanctifi-

cation reaches on through the ages, and must be viewed accordingly, it deals also with the Israelites of the exile to whom Ezekiel's words were first directed. Hence they and their guilt are mentioned: **from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.** "Filthiness" here and "idols" are not identical, as though the latter were the sin proper, and the former only a term for it. *Gillul* is a derogatory name for idols and means a block-like thing. A. Pfeiffer renders *gillulim Dreckdinge*. These idols were the source of the moral corruption and filthiness of the ancient Jews. For Israel's relation to Jehovah was always the norm, impulse, and dynamic power regulating its *qadosh* character, as the writer mentioned properly puts it. "All your filthinesses" is graphically explained in v. 17. With its idols in the land Israel might do what it pleased, before God it had the standing of a menstruating woman, who was debarred from communion with God's dwelling among his people, and that under penalty of death, and capable only of defiling by her touch and thus depriving others of this communion, Lev. 15, 19-31. Not by a Levitical rite, but by an act of the Lord himself shall these "filthinesses" be removed, and that fully and completely: "will I cleanse you." **Clean water** does not mean chemically clean and physically sanitary, but water sanctified by the Word, thus divinely clean and cleansing, even as Luther called the baptismal water *Gotteswasser*, Eph. 5, 26.

V. 26 is a description, not of sanctification as A. Pfeiffer supposes, but of regeneration, John 3, 5. **A new heart also will I give you**, one born anew, regenerated. The terms "clean" in "clean water" and "new" in "a new heart" correspond. The claim that "a new heart" means one with new functions is only partly correct, for there is that in the new heart which is wholly different from what was in the old heart, aside from any functions or acts, and before there

are any such functions. Of course, when the functions follow they will show that the heart is now a new one, though these functions do not constitute the newness. Thus the fear, love, and trust now appearing, in the acts that exhibit these godly virtues, prove that in the heart a new life has been implanted and begun to pulsate. — This is made plain by the next clause: **and a new spirit will I put within you.** While “heart,” *leb*, is often used for the center of our being and the seat of the personality, comprising intellect, emotions, and will, the term “spirit” in a more direct way points to the real ego, and is also a higher term. One who has the “new spirit” is a “new creature,” a “new man,” in the language of the New Testament. Of course, man is and remains a spirit even in his sins. The expression “old spirit” is not used. But while under the dominance of sin man’s spirit is degraded, closed against impressions from above, open only to the depraved influences from below, the world and the flesh. The “new spirit” is therefore the spirit of man made new by being restored to its true functions, i. e. to receive again all the impressions from God through his Word and Spirit, and able to close itself against the debasing influences from beneath. — The new heart is a gift from the Lord: **will I give.** This giving, *nathan*, is always grace. It does not exclude means, even as baptism has already been mentioned. God’s grace and giving is by the means of grace, Word and Sacrament, as witness the 3,000 on Pentecost. We have only a synonym in the term used with spirit: **I will put,** from *qareb*. The reminder that the Lord here does not use “create,” *bara’*, is misleading, for the verbs used do not mean to deny “create,” and in no way conflict with “create.” By his chosen means of grace the Lord gives the new heart, and puts the new spirit into us. The point stressed is monergism, as against synergism, for the Lord alone can do this, and he alone does it. — A negative clause is added to

make the matter fully clear. There is no use to insist that logically this negative should have been put first, and then the positive. That is a matter for the speaker to decide. When the Lord speaks of giving a new heart, there is a plain implication that there must have been originally an old heart. That implication is now stated outright, so making everything clear: **and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh.** The old heart is here called "the stony" heart, and the new heart "an heart of flesh." Both expressions are figurative. A heart of stone is one wholly impervious to impressions from God. It is like a stone, and cannot be penetrated, nor will it respond within. Over against this the heart or flesh is soft, quickly and fully receives impressions and responds to them. This double figure is striking in many ways. Ungodly men do seem to have a dead, cold stone where they ought to have a live, warm heart. The Word rolls off their hearts as off a stone, until their hearts are made new. Spiritual death consists in having a stone heart. What a terrible thing for a heart to turn to stone! This is what the Bible means by hardness of heart. To remove a stone heart and put in its place a flesh heart is an operation which only one surgeon is able to perform successfully, namely the Lord. It is a creative act of grace. Do not bring in omnipotence here, which really is absolute power. Figures must not be overstressed, else we get error instead of truth. This replacing of hearts, while a work of creative grace, is and remains a spiritual operation performed by the divine means of grace alone. — The verb *hesir*, hiphil from *sur*, means "to make disappear," and thus "to take away." Yet we must not urge that in the measure in which the old heart disappears the new one takes its place. For this notion puts sanctification in the place of regeneration, and thus perverts the meaning of the text. — There is a kind of paradox in a *stony*

heart and a body of *flesh*. How unnatural! Everything about the body functions, except the heart. How natural to have again a heart of *flesh*, in place of a heart of stone.

V. 25 speaks of justification; v. 26 of regeneration; and now v. 27 of sanctification. The basic thing is put first: **And I will put my spirit within you.** In v. 26 a new heart and a new spirit were promised, i. e. both heart and spirit were to be changed by regeneration. As regards the heart v. 26 added that it was to be changed from stone to flesh. Now the first clause in v. 27 adds a corresponding statement regarding the spirit. But instead of a parallel to the stony heart turned into one of flesh, the statement regarding the spirit goes deeper. We are not told that the old unresponsive spirit shall be turned into a new responsive spirit. Instead we are told how the new spirit shall be produced, namely by our receiving God's own Spirit. Why our version spells **spirit** without a capital is hard to say. We know of the Holy Spirit, but of no spirit of God. The idea of A. Pfeiffer that God's Spirit takes the place in us of our own spirit is wholly untenable. But the Bible speaks a great deal about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And that is what is meant here. God's Holy Spirit dwelling in us makes our own spirit new. While under sin our spirit did not function properly. Created originally to receive impressions from above, our spirit under the control of sin became dead to such impressions and responded only to those from beneath. But with God's Spirit dwelling in us this shall all be righted and made as it should be. The verb is again *qareb* as in v. 26. — The indwelling of God's Spirit involves regeneration, just like the reception of a heart of flesh. Here, however, it is not so much the act of regeneration that is made prominent, as the new life thus assured. Hence the close addition: **and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall**

keep my judgments, and do them. On "statutes," *chuggim*, and "judgments," *mishpatim*, compare Mal. 4, 4, Second Sunday in Advent. Both are embodied in the Torah. The verbs correspond to the nouns. The statutes mark out the path of godly conduct, hence we walk in that path, and the Holy Spirit causes the walking in these statutes, *halak*, "to go," or "to walk." The judgments settle decisive points of conduct according to God's norms, hence we keep these judgments, *shamar*, observe them and do not violate them, guard them against violation and breaking by obeying other norms. — The addition: "and do them," viz. the judgments, elucidates the guarding. It is done not by keeping others in line, but by each one himself doing the right things. Willingly, by free and voluntary inner impulses these new hearts and new spirits delight to do the Lord's will. Luther's explanation of the First Petition is very much to the point here: "When . . . we as the children of God also lead a holy life according to it," the Word of God. Thus indeed is the Holy Name sanctified in this sinful, heathenish world.

V. 28 ends our pericope with a double promise. The first: **And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers**, is for the exiles in Babylon, and the Israelites as such. God did restore their land to them and thus vindicated himself before the heathen as the covenant God Yahveh. This fulfillment of the promise here given is a seal and guarantee of all else that God would do in his great plan of salvation to sanctify his Holy Name as the God of covenant grace in all the world and among all the nations. But this promise of restoration to the land given to their fathers, and the fulfillment of this promise under Ezra and Nehemiah and the years following, pertaining to the Jews only, like all God's promises, has a silent condition attached, viz. as long as with new hearts they should keep God's statutes and judgments. When

that condition was violated at last Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were finally rejected and sent into permanent exile. God ceased to sanctify himself in them as a nation. A spiritual Israel took the place of that one nation. Pentecost and its 3,000 converts ushered in the new era and new covenant. — Thus the Lord puts beside the particular promise to the Jewish exiles the broader promise: **and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.** This applies, too, to those returned exiles with new hearts and spirits, but at the same time it reaches on and out to the end of time and the final consummation of the sanctifying of God's Holy Name in the new earth: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God," Rev. 21, 3. When that final consummation is reached all that is hostile to God among the nations, all profanation of his Holy Name, shall have been swept from the whole earth, and the word shall be fulfilled: "Behold, I make all things new," Rev. 21, 5. "Write: for these words are true and faithful."

SUGGESTIONS

There is a marked resemblance between our text and what happened on Pentecost. Before Peter were assembled the people who had carried the profanation of the Holy Name to the limit of crucifying the Son of God: "Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts 2, 23. They profaned the Name right among the heathen, by delivering Jesus over to Pilate and insisting that the heathen governor send him to the cross. But by his grace and Spirit 3,000 of the assembly before Peter receive a new heart and new spirit, form the first Christian congregation and walk in newness of life. This New Testament parallel at Pentecost may be utilized for the festival sermon on our text. The outline may be analytical, using the two parts of our text in the given order, for the first part v. 22-24, and for the second v. 25-28.

How God Sanctifies his Great Name at Pentecost.*I. He sends his Spirit, and begins to end the profanation.*

- 1) As in Ezekiel's day Israel was under divine punishment, subject to the Romans.
- 2) As in Ezekiel's day Israel was wholly unworthy in God's eyes.
- 3) As in Ezekiel's day God could and did consider only his own Name, its glory and honor in the world of men as the Lord of the covenant.
- 4) So he sent his Holy Spirit, the Word and Sacraments, and began his world-wide work of grace.

II. He sends his Spirit, and begins to make hearts and spirits new.

- 1) The cleansing in justification, v. 25. "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," Acts 2, 38.
- 2) The regeneration, v. 26; Acts 3, 41.
- 3) The new life, v. 27; Acts 3, 42 and 46-47.
- 4) This whole work has gone on throughout the entire world.

A fine Pentecost theme in the text itself should not be overlooked. Pentecost can mean nothing to you unless God's Holy Spirit enters also your heart.

"I Will Put my Spirit Within You."*I. For my great Name's sake. (Cause.)*

- a) Without any merit of yours. There was none, either when Ezekiel spoke, or when the Spirit came on Pentecost.
- b) Wholly by grace. Jehovah and his covenant.

II. Making your hearts and spirits new. (Manner.)

- a) Justification, v. 25.
- b) Regeneration, v. 26.

III. To serve me in my kingdom. (Purpose and object.)

- a) That you walk in my statutes, etc., v. 27.
- b) And dwell in the spiritual land of God's kingdom, his holy Christian Church, v. 28.

What the text says about Israel's heart may be used as a gateway into the entire text. The stony heart does nothing

but profane Jehovah's name among men, while in the new heart of flesh Jehovah's name is again sanctified.

Pentecost and Our Hearts.

- I. *By his Spirit the Lord takes away the stony heart.* Describe it, how it profaned the Name in the prophet's day, and ever since — how it deserved only to be cast out forever — how the Lord's Spirit leads it to contrition by the law, and thus takes it away.
- II. *By his Spirit the Lord gives a heart of flesh.* — Describe the cleansing in justification and newness in regeneration — the living response to his statutes and judgments — the new people in the land of grace.

The best sermons on our text deal with the subject of heart renewal. We select one by K. Beck:

The Complete Renewal of the Heart by the Pentecostal Spirit.

- I. *The old heart.* II. *The new heart.*

He first describes the old heart: 1) stone: hard and un-receptive; dead and immovable, except when it rolls down into misery; heavy, always sinking into mere earthly things. Then he shows that it must be taken away. Here, however, he simply compares Pentecost and us to-day. It would be better to describe the contrition at Pentecost in the case of the 3,000, and then apply this to us. Better still would be to add what our text says about profanation, and how the terribleness of this must be brought home to us, to crush the stony heart completely. — He describes the new heart as receptive and living; and then tells us that it comes from God. Far better would be to dwell on justification, regeneration, and sanctification; and then to add that the new heart requires a new "land," the Church and its means for keeping the heart new.

Naumann's outline has something suggestive:

The New Heart that God Gives.

- I. *We need it;* II. *God's Spirit creates it;* III. *By it we become a new people.*

One of the most careful skeletonizers is old Fresenius. Here is his effort centering on v. 26-27:

The Great Change that Occurs in Entering the State of Grace.

- I. *The great change itself.* 1) It is one wrought by the Lord and his Spirit. 2) He gives: a new heart; a new spirit; his Holy Spirit.
- II. *The state of grace.* 1) The sinner is pardoned; 2) He is now able to walk as one pardoned; 3) As one pardoned he is also blessed.

Fresenius always adds an appropriation. So here: Admonition to examine ourselves; to pray with repentance; to grow in godliness.—It is better to weave into the body of the sermon such appropriation and application, as also Fresenius' manner has not been generally followed.

TRINITY SUNDAY

Is. 6, 1-8

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is basic for the Christian faith and Church. Without this doctrine the Church, or any one listed as her member, ceases to be Christian in any sense of the word; with this doctrine the Christian character, at least to some degree, remains. Hence we begin every divine public service "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and close it with the benediction and doxology, both of which name the Triune Name. All the ecumenical confessions confess most solemnly the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three Persons, one Essence. All Unitarians are outside the pale of the Christian Church, and that of necessity, for its extreme border line is marked by faith in the Trinity. — Our people need to be told these facts again and again. Their consciousness must be fully alive to them in this age especially when so many are deceived and satisfied with the bare names "God" and "Father," which so often are meant to deny the Trinity. Free Masons and other lodge men confess only a Supreme Being, and do it together with Jews, Mohammedans, and other non-believers in the Son of God, and yet claim membership in the Christian Church, perhaps hold high office in her organization. The thing is really monstrous — once to deny by lodge connection and confession this solemn doctrine, the very rock bottom of Christianity, and again to confess this doctrine with true Christians, means a lie one way or the other. Such double, contradictory confession is the palpable mark of the most damnable hypocrisy possible, since it deals with the Lord God himself.

The churches that permit it brand themselves as false churches, and stand so branded, if not in the sight of the world, then in the sight of the true God and all true believers. Judgment Day will reveal the brand.

The close of the festival half of the Church Year is made with Trinity Sunday. After celebrating the three great saving acts of God, the Incarnation, the Death and Resurrection, and the Outpouring of the Spirit in grand cycles culminating in the corresponding festivals, the Church unites in confessing and praising the Triune God as the author of our salvation. As in a flaming focus all the preceding Sundays and festivals center their rays of light in this Trinity festival. That is the idea of this festive Sunday. And then from this central focus, in the following twenty-seven after-Trinity Sundays, the light of salvation spreads once more, and shines forth in divided rays to illumine the Triune God's work of salvation in the individual soul and in the communion of saints here on earth, ending with the consummation of that work at the last day. — We have already answered the question whether the Old Testament reveals God as Triune. Compare the comment on Ps. 110, 1 in the text for Ascension Day. If more should be necessary, compare any sound work on Dogmatics. From the first chapter of Genesis on to the last one in Revelations, in ever increasing light shines the glory of the Holy Trinity. But it is, in all this mass of revelation, the economic Trinity, i. e. the three persons as concerned in the work of salvation. We are safe in saying that God would never have troubled to show us anything of the unfathomable mystery of his being, so far beyond all comprehension of human reason, if this had not been necessary in order properly to reveal to us his great work of creation, redemption, and sanctification. Through this work alone, then, we ought to approach the Holy Trinity and God's revelation concerning himself. Speculative metaphysical

studies are really altogether fruitless, and often highly dangerous to faith. With investigations of this kind, no matter under what guise of theological learning and profundity, we mean to have nothing to do.

Our text recounts the wonderful immediate calling of Isaiah to his office of prophet. In this respect he resembles the greatest Old Testament prophet Moses, although all prophets were immediately called. Yes, Isaiah, like Moses, was granted a vision of God and both tell us the vision, in which they were thus called. On this Sunday, however, the fact of Isaiah's call to the prophetic office is secondary for our people. That feature of the text we utilize in setting forth the economic character of the revelation here given to Isaiah. The chief thing for us is the revelation itself of the glory and majesty of God here recorded by Isaiah, especially that part of the revelation which centers in the doxology of the seraphim, when thrice they acclaim God as holy. It is the Triune God whom Isaiah here unveils before us. That makes this a text for our present festival. And when we let the full impression of it sink into our minds and hearts, we are overwhelmed by the grandeur of this text. As God shines forth gloriously out of these holy words our souls bow down into the dust before him to worship with the seraphim. This text is like the Holy of Holies. Let him who studies it begin like Moses by taking off his shoes from his feet, for every word is holy ground, and we are but sinful, unholy men. What a condescension of his grace that in these words he draws nigh unto us!

1. In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3. And one,

cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Isaiah began his prophetic career about 754 B. C., and here tells us himself that it was the year of king Uzziah's death. Our text describes Isaiah's first call into his office. In what follows, v. 7 etc., we have the message which Isaiah was to bring to Israel, namely the terrible announcement of rejection with hope held out only for a remnant, "a tenth," "the holy seed," v. 13. While five chapters containing three addresses precede this account of the prophet's original call, these five chapters are part of the message given to Isaiah and were spoken, not before, but after his call, so that our text, as it were, justifies the prophet for speaking in those three addresses as he did. The reason why the prophet did not put the narrative concerning his call at the head of his book, but in this place, namely ch. 6, is that he intended, as far as we are able to judge, to place the formal announcement of the message he had from the Lord right next to the beginning of the fulfillment. For in chapter seven the events begin which led eventually to the exile of Israel. — Now the call of Isaiah was exceptional and remarkable in that it took place in a vision granted him by the Lord. **I saw**, with what follows, states this fact. There is no hint of a dream or sleep. Isaiah was fully awake when the Lord opened his eyes to see heavenly things. "I saw" does not mean: with bodily eyes; for divine things are not seen thus. Isaiah saw "in spirit." Jesus refers to this vision in John 12, 41 when he says of Isaiah: "he saw his (the Lord's) glory, and spake of him." In such seeing there is a cessation of natural sight, and the soul has clearly and miraculously before its eyes the revelation God

intends. It is the vision of ecstasy. Physically Isaiah remained where he was, but his spirit stood in the throne room of the Lord and actually beheld what was there. Not that his spirit was momentarily snatched from his body or separated from it. Our ideas of space and separation in space must be put aside as not applicable here. — The English **also** is misleading, as though there was some other activity beside the seeing. The Hebrew *v^e* merely marks the beginning of the main clause. — Isaiah says that he saw **the Lord, Adonay**, the Ruler of all, and at once adds the details: **sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.** There is a correspondence between *Adonay* and *kisse'*; this supreme Ruler properly sits in exalted majesty upon "a throne." The modifiers "high and lifted up" (*nissa'*, from *nasa'*) belong to "throne." The two terms emphasize the exaltation of the glorious seat. — The word "train" is a plural, *shulim*, the bottom of a garment with voluminous folds. This description is anthropomorphic, which means that Isaiah saw the Lord in human form. The throne and its elevation, the sitting, and the folds of the garment are all a condescension of the invisible God to Isaiah's human powers to see and apprehend. Likewise "the temple," *hekal*, "palace," a vast hall, and thus "temple" as the royal palace of God. St. John sums all this up in the one term *doxa*, or glory, and tells us that this Adonay whose glory Isaiah saw was the person of Jesus. Delitzsch writes: "Rightly so, for the Incarnation of God is the truth contained in all the biblical anthropomorphisms, and the name of Jesus is the revealed mystery of the name Jehovah." Already at this point we touch the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. For if these anthropomorphic revelations in the Old Testament are all revelations of the second person of the Godhead, and they are that beyond question, then the Holy Trinity stands revealed

in the Old Testament, and is so revealed in the text before us. But more anon.

In v. 2 the description of the Lord's glory continues. Above the throne stood **the seraphims**. This English plural is erroneous, and presumes that "seraphim" is a singular. We should use as the true plural form "seraphim" only. There is some reluctance about taking it that these seraphim **stood above it**, rather: "above him," namely the Lord. So the words are softened to mean that the seraphim "stood ready for service," *'amad* read in this sense. Or the two wings for flying are brought in, and the seraphim are conceived as hovering on their wings, but not above the Lord as though they overtopped him, but as hovering above the train of the Lord's garment. Yet Delitzsch, who has this idea, admits that *minima'al* is the strongest term for *supra*, or "above." We see no reason for not assuming that the seraphim hovered on either side above the Lord. This position is in no way derogatory to the Lord whose glory they helped to show forth. This the less, since the Lord himself appears in condescension to Isaiah in human form.—There is great debate as to just what the word *seraphim* signifies, since it is found only in our passage. The singular in a few passages always signifies serpent. There is little use in here reviewing all the different wrong notions. Delitzsch jabs one of these: "the heaven storming omnipotence contained in the ink of a German man of learning." Koelling calls them "fire-dragons," though he thinks of them in human form. The derivation is from *saraph*, "to burn up," from which *saraph*, the noun for "serpent" is derived. Delitzsch compares them with the cherubim, and makes the latter the bearers of the fiery wrath of God, while the seraphim are taken as the bearers of the fiery love of God. This conception Delitzsch draws from the act described in v. 6-7. Koenig combines the data in our text: "beings

who do something with the "hand," who praise God's holiness and revere it, hence personal ethical beings"; and the name he translates *Verbrennende, Laeuternde*. This is the best furnished by the newer learning. The older view takes the seraphim to be the highest rank of angels. That seems by far the best view. For note that they are in the Lord's immediate presence, even above him in this vision, and give voice to his holiness. In addition, whatever may be the result of the etymological research, this vision, in which the Lord himself condescends to appear humanly to Isaiah, ought certainly to include, that these heavenly spirits, who as such have no bodily form at all, are also made to appear to Isaiah so that he could behold them. Their form is one assumed for this vision to harmonize with the Lord's glory, and this includes their activity in the vision, namely glorifying the Lord and assisting in the preparation of Isaiah for his prophetic calling. This is amply sufficient. — **Each one had six wings** is in the Hebrew: "six wings, six wings to each one." That was the form in which these angel or spirit beings appeared here. That on some other occasion and for some other purpose they might appear in a different form is hereby not denied or excluded. — The purpose of this threefold pair of wings is added: **with twain he covered his face**, a symbolic action, because of the ineffable glory and majesty of the Lord; **and with twain he covered his feet**, again symbolic of their creature relation to their glorious Creator; **and with twain he did fly**, this, too, symbolic of their attendance upon God, hovering on either side of the Lord and above him in this vision for Isaiah, and hastening to do the Lord's will, as here shown in v. 6. The imperfect piel forms of the verbs *yekasseh* (twice) and *yepheph* denote duration; this covering and flying was constant.

V. 3 adds the activity of the seraphim to the description of their appearance: **And one cried unto**

another and said: This does not mean that there were only two of these beings, the one making response to the other; but that there were two companies to the right and the left of the Lord, and each company cried responsively to the other. — Either the two repeated the entire expression of praise, or the one company the threefold “Holy,” and the other responded with: “The whole earth is full of his glory.” As to the holiness and the glory or gloriousness, Bengel and Oetinger have well said: the gloriousness is the holiness uncovered; and the holiness is the gloriousness covered up. **Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts!** proclaims a divine fact. He who was called *Adonay* in v. 1 is now called *Yahveh Ts^eba’oth*, namely the Lord of the covenant, the Leader and Lord of the hosts of heaven. In “Yahveh of the hosts” there is combined heavenly rule, authority, and lordship with covenant grace and truth. In this name earth is united with heaven. Reference has been made to the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer in connection with this seraphic antiphony. Quite properly. What we pray for in the first petition the seraphim declare as fulfilled: “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.” What we pray for in the second petition they likewise declare fulfilled: “The whole earth is full of his glory.” They need not add that his will is perfectly done, for this really lies in his name Yahveh of the hosts. And it is his saving or covenant will which the supreme Lord of the heavenly hosts cannot but execute fully in his unchanging covenant grace and truth. Him the seraphim call “holy” or separate in the supreme degree. As such he is separate or transcendent above the whole creature world, and separate from all sin and impurity as the supreme Light and Purity. — **The whole earth is full of his glory** declares that this holiness of the Lord of hosts shines through the whole earth, i. e. is reflected everywhere in it, is fully revealed in every part of it. In other words, what we

now pray for, and what to a certain degree has already come to be, the seraphim proclaim as completely accomplished. The Lord's holiness is to be universally revealed, or, which is the same, his gloriousness is to be the fulness of the whole earth. For *m'lo'* is a noun, and denotes "fulness": "Fulness of the whole earth (is) his glory." This is the goal and end of all of Yahveh's works. Isaiah is but a man, in the midst of the earth as it was at that time. He is made to hear this praise of the seraphim, that he may know what is to be on earth at last, and what to the Lord who is above all time really is already; and the heavenly forms he beholds in this are meant to make him realize what this glory is to be of which the world is to be full. Compare Rev. 4, 8: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." — The question that must be settled here is whether this threefold ascription of holiness refers to the Trinity. Calvin and later exegetes deny this. Some go so far as to deny all revelation of the Trinity in the Old Testament. But if these three "holy" are not meant for the three persons of the Godhead, then why are they here? The only answer that remains is that they are intended for emphasis. But note well, emphasis is regularly secured by repetition only, i. e. a thing is said twice. Cases where a thing is said three times for mere emphasis are extremely rare in Scripture. Koelling is able to point only to Jer. 7, 4, where it is a question if mere emphasis is intended; his reference to Nahum 1, 2 is no clear repetition. But why should there be such exceptional emphasis here, such unusual rhetorical strengthening? No one has given an adequate answer. Delitzsch is right about the significance of numbers in the Bible, for instance the world made in twice *three* days, by *ten* power-words, and completed in *seven* days, although the heathen philosophy he connects with numbers may well be omitted. So also we pass over the significance

which he finds in the number three, when he calls it the unity unfolded to two and closed again (thus reaching three, and no more). We shrink from such notions the more since Delitzsch would apply the number three in this sense to what he calls "the trinitarian process." For there is no process of any kind in the Trinity, or between the three persons. This process idea is purely a human speculation, sometimes put forth in a learned and apparently devout way, yet in reality a denial of the immutability of God and of the co-eternity of the three persons. — There is a begging of the question here at issue when the emphatic denial is made that these three "holy" are not a "proof" of the Trinity, in the sense that if we had only these three seraphic "holy" we certainly would not know that God is three persons in one essence. To our best knowledge nobody has ever claimed such a thing. The thing that *is* claimed, however, is that the Trinity adequately revealed already in the Old Testament, and completely revealed in the New, is certainly meant here by "Holy, holy, holy," thrice repeated so significantly. Delitzsch is right: these three "holy" refer to the Trinity. That is enough. There is plenty of clear and actual *proof*, as when three different persons are named, and when one of these speaks to a second, etc.; when the Baptist names the three, and the Jews all take that as a matter of course, and oppose Jesus not because he says there is a Son of God distinct from the Father as a person, but only because he, a mere man as they thought, claimed to be that Son (see the charge at his trial before the Sanhedrim). With this *proof* our passage *accords*. Or, to put it concisely, the Trisagion is *evidence* of the Trinity, has always been so taken by the church, and in spite of all objection to the contrary will so continue to stand. — Delitzsch and others admit that the Trisagion was meant for the Trinity by the seraphim, but was not thus understood by Isaiah.

This is a favorite notion among commentators, namely that the old prophets and the old Jews had no consciousness of many Old Testament revelations, such as the resurrection of the body, the dwelling of godly departed spirits in heaven with God, and in our passage the reference of the Trisagion to the Trinity. Really this is a cheap claim, for who can call up these dead prophets and people now and ask them: How much did you really consciously grasp of these divine revelations? But mark well that St. John in 12, 41 declares that Isaiah testified in our text concerning Jesus. To say or think Isaiah did it unconsciously is going beyond Scripture. For the great purpose of this vision of Isaiah was to reveal God to him, and God in connection with his plan of salvation, and that means the economic Trinity, and no less. When Isaiah in ch. 53 described the humiliation and the exaltation of the great Ebed Yahveh (Servant of Jehovah), did he there, too, write of the Son and Messiah, the second person of the Godhead, unconsciously? Here again let us decline to be confused and drawn away from the real point at issue, by the question how much did Isaiah know consciously concerning the Trinity. The question of degree is not at issue here. It is the question merely of fact. Even with the New Testament our degree of knowledge is limited enough on this greatest of all divine mysteries. Isaiah consciously knew the Trinity in the degree revealed to him in his day; and that degree was greater, we venture to believe, than that of the speculating theologians who are blind to what was really revealed to the prophets in the days of old.

V. 4 describes the effect of the voice of the seraphim. **The posts of the door** really should read: "the foundation of the sills." *'Ammah* is the base into which the door posts were set; and *saph* is sill or threshold, here in the plural. Not merely the posts of the door, or as the Vulgate has it, the cross-piece

at the top of these posts, but the very base or sills **moved**, or shook, so mighty was the sound of the voice that filled the building. No need to talk about a response of all inanimate things in the other world when God is praised. This has the odor of speculation. This was a vision intended for Isaiah. This shaking, then, he records for us to convey to us how tremendous was the voice he heard. That is enough. — **The voice of him that cried** reads as if only one seraph is meant; it should be the plural: "of those crying." — **And the house was filled with smoke** means that this was a second effect of the mighty voices of the seraphim. That much is quite clear. Delitzsch says the smoke came from the altar mentioned in v. 6, and even speaks of a sacrifice which at the praise of the seraphim was kindled by a look of love from the Lord. Frankly, this sounds like fiction, for there is no trace of all this in the text. Koelling calls the smoke a symbol, God who is light appearing in a covering of cloud, going with Israel in a pillar of cloud and of fire. The trouble is that cloud is not smoke. Moreover, the Lord was already revealed to Isaiah minus cloud and smoke, and he has told us how he saw the Lord. In this vision **smoke** is evidently symbolic, but it never symbolizes God's presence as light, and it is in vain to connect it with the altar fire and God's love. Quite the contrary, smoke goes with the divine wrath, is a symbol of that wrath and the destruction it works. See Koenig on the meanings of *'ashan*. When the seraphim cried holy, holy, holy, so that the very foundations shook, this smoke appeared symbolizing the destructive power of that holiness against all sin and evil. Both the moving foundations and the volumes of smoke are terrifying manifestations. Both are in place here, for Isaiah is to be sent as a prophet to vindicate the Lord's holiness, and therefore to announce to Judah that the day of her judgment has come. Delitzsch with his *Liebesfeuer*, and Koelling

with his God of light, miss the whole connection in thus trying to solve the "smoke."

5. Then said I, *Woe is me!* for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7. And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

In v. 5 Isaiah makes his confession; in V. 6-7 he received the absolution. The impression which the vision made upon Isaiah was crushing in the extreme. Instead of being able to join in a humble way in the holy praise of the Lord, he found himself so unholy that he could not do anything of the kind. On the contrary, for him, an unholy, sinful man to stand there in that holy presence and actually to see the Lord himself, surely meant his doom. So he cried: **Woe is me!** or: "Woe to me!" Three *ki* follow, each stating a reason for what precedes. — Why woe to him? **For I am undone**, margin: "cut off," the verb being the niph'al from *damah* II, "to be annihilated." — The second *ki* states the reason why Isaiah feels himself doomed to utter destruction: **because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.** His own personal uncleanness, i. e. sinfulness in the sense of unholiness, is intensified by his natural connection with a people unclean, and thus unholy. Isaiah uses *tame'* as the opposite of *qadosh*. Only that which is holy could abide in this holy place made absolutely so by the Allholy One's presence. He mentions his lips

and the lips of his people as carrying this uncleanness, because the seraphim with clean and holy lips praised and magnified the allholy Adonay. His unclean lips, unable to voice holy praise, attest his general uncleanness. — A third *ki* states the final reason, one that covers both preceding statements: **for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.** He calls the Lord *Melek*, “King,” because he has seen him enthroned, in his royal robe with its mighty train, and with his royal attendants, the seraphim. He adds: “the LORD of hosts,” because this is the name he has just heard from the seraphim. Because he has thus seen the uncovered majesty of the Lord, he a sinful man, he feels that he is lost. For all through the Old Testament runs the conviction, based on Ex. 33, 20 and similar statements, that no man can see God and live, that his holiness in particular is a consuming fire for every sinner, Is. 33, 14. Isaiah was right. What follows shows that the Lord himself acted in accord with Isaiah’s judgment on himself. But the Lord acted in grace; he responded to Isaiah’s confession by a heavenly absolution.

At once, automatically executing the Lord’s will, **flew one of the seraphims unto me**, to purify Isaiah. The Hebrew reads: **and in his hand a live coal, *ritsphah***, not a hot stone, since there were none on the altar, but a burning coal; **which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar.** It is the Lord himself, as all the Scriptures testify, who pardons, justifies, cleanses from guilt. But he uses agents and means. In the Christian Church he uses the Church and her ministry, the Word and Sacraments. In the Old Testament covenant with Israel the Levitical rites with altars and sacrifices. Here in this vision the symbolism is molded after the latter. But the entire proceeding in this absolution is exalted, and is thus exceptional, because it is heavenly and takes place in heaven. The Lord might have simply pronounced

Isaiah's pardon; it pleased him to use a pardoning rite. One of the seraphim performs the rite and pronounces the pardon. One sees at once that this is a heavenly counterpart to the earthly means of sealing absolution. The altar with fire is the heavenly parallel to the altar of the Lord in Israel. Yet no sacrifice is mentioned, and neither blood, nor any other part of the sacrifice is used, because here the Lord through the seraph deals directly with Isaiah in the heavenly presence. Yet the cleansing is mediated by this heavenly altar, a burning coal being taken from it. The sacredness, both of the altar and of the coals upon it, is symbolized by the tongs, *melqachayim*, always in the dual, since it has two clasps. The seraph does not himself touch the sacred coal, but carries it as indicated.

Absolution is a personal act. This is here brought out distinctly: **And he laid it upon my mouth**, since Isaiah had mentioned his unclean lips, and also since the Lord was about to use his lips and mouth in proclaiming judgment on Israel and pardon for the faithful remnant. The latter point is worth noting, comp. Jer. 1, 9, in connection with Verbal Inspiration. The human lips which the Lord used to convey to men his own words he himself prepared and sanctified. The verb *naga'* is used twice, first in the hiphil *yagga'*, "caused to touch," in our version: "laid upon"; then in the absolving pronouncement in the kal *naga'* "hath touched." By this heavenly means pardoning grace is applied personally to Isaiah. There is a fine symbolism in thus using a live coal to touch the sinner's lips. Its holy fire by this touch to his person burns away and utterly consumes his guilt, so that it no longer exists. When we remember St. John's word that it was Jesus, the Son, who sat upon the throne and had this pardoning means applied, the heavenly rite becomes still more impressive. — Now follows the verbal absolution: **Lo, this hath touched thy lips;**

and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

The absolving means and the absolving words belong and go together. The doubling in the absolving words gives them double weight, for these words express the vital thing. The *v^e* connecting *naga'* and *sar* indicate that these acts are simultaneous, the touching and the taking away occur the same instant. — Here are two blessed expressions for pardon or justification. The one is: **thine iniquity is taken away.** The term '*avon* is often used of the guilt of sin, and this is removed, *sar*, from *sur*, so that it is gone, namely so that it no longer exists. Blessed the man whose guilt no longer exists! The other is: **thy sin purged**, using the more comprehensive *chatta'th*, and the exceedingly significant *kaphar*, here the pual *th^ekuphphar*, "is covered." The English "purge" might mean "wash away"; the Hebrew denotes covering for removing out of God's sight. Compare the *kaphphoreth*, the lid of the ark of the covenant, called the mercy seat, on which the blood was sprinkled to cover the accusing law (the tables laid in the ark). Blessed the man whose sin is thus forever covered and made non-existent and non-effective, as Koenig puts it!

All thus far in the vision has been preparatory for the purpose now revealed. Isaiah has seen the glory of the Son, namely his heavenly power as Ruler, and his holiness forever set against sin. He has also experienced in a heavenly manner the divine grace and pardon upon his humble confession of sin. All this is with a view to his calling as a prophet. Indelibly this revelation must have burned its impressions into his soul. Isaiah's call is immediate. In his absolution God used a seraph, the call God the Son himself gave. **Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying**, and "Lord" here is again '*Adonay*, the All-Ruler, **Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?** The mission is not specified. There is no need. Whoever is sent will be given what to say and what to do,

and that all through in his mission. There is a marked difference between the singular in "shall I send" and the plural "for us." And here is where the commentators do indeed reveal themselves! One thing seems settled with the moderns at least: in the plural there can and dare be no intimation of the Holy Trinity. Why not? There is no real answer. But if this is no intimation of the Trinity, what is this plural? It simply cannot be the majestic plural, for the very sufficient reason that no speaker uses in the same breath the singular "I" and the plural "we" ("us"). Other notions are still worse, such as the abstract idea in the plural; and the subject (I) talking of himself as the object (us). But a plural must in some way be gotten. So Koelling combines the Lord and Isaiah — an unheard-of idea! Delitzsch gets a plural by drawing in the seraphim — a plural indeed, but what kind? To aid the matter we are told that the seraphim together with the Lord formed a kind of council, that as *b^ene haelohim* the seraphim were a *patria* or family (Eph. 3, 15) with the Lord. But all this carting in of material that is not pertinent only shows the weakness of the claim of Delitzsch. For one simple thing is certain and decisive: Isaiah went on his prophetic mission for the Lord, and for no seraphim. For the one who sent him Isaiah went, and for no others. The marginal references in our English Bible are far sounder than these learned commentators. They put this plural "for us" in parallel with the same plural in Gen. 1, 26; 3, 22; 11, 7. For the Son to send Isaiah meant that God sent him, the Father as well as the Spirit. *Lanu*, "for us," will thus stand as a reference to the Trinity, until a better solution is found — and there is none in sight after centuries of study. When Delitzsch refers to Hofmann in denying this Trinity reference we recall Philippi's charge against Hofmann that he is really Arian in his doctrine; that is enough. As for the modern exegetical tradition that there is

really no revelation of the Trinity in the Old Testament, a tradition often coupled in the New Testament with the denial of the two natures of Christ and similar errors, this stands condemned by the facts that lie before us in both Testaments. — With his lips and heart cleansed Isaiah responds to the suggestive question of the Lord with holy alacrity: **Here am I; send me**, lit.: “Behold me; send me!” The task is hard, Isaiah is ready to assume the burden in the strength the Lord gives. The final goal is glorious, Isaiah is inspired by the outcome. Sent by the Lord he will be the Lord’s tool and instrument. “Send me” implies that. He will do and say what the Lord gives, not what he may think or like to decide. Would that all preaches would understand the Lord’s sending, and thus voice only the Lord’s will and Word. — The account contains no more. In v. 9, the Lord orders: “Go, and tell this people.” So Isaiah was sent, so he went; and in his book we have the whole great mission which he executed under the divine authority: “Thus saith the Lord!”

SUGGESTIONS

Koegel has the following introduction and outline:

The apostolic greeting (The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, etc.) has just now offered to you anew, dear congregation of the Lord, in benediction the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. A threefold salvation! And at the close of the service the Aaronitic benediction will beg of the Lord for you, for threefold salvation, that the Lord may keep you, that the Lord may be gracious unto you, and that the Lord may give you peace. Again, in the epistle for the present Sunday there is a threefold direction of divine grace: from God, through God, to God are all things! And not only the present Sunday, by summarizing Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, namely the festival of the Father who sends, the festival of the Son who is sent, the festival of the Holy Ghost who proceeds from both, preaches the Holy Trinity, each one of you is appointed a preacher of this

great mystery. For each one of you has been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Ye are to be holy, says the Triune God, for I am holy! — Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Sabaoth! This exalted song is given us for our uplifting, for doctrine, for correction, for warning, for hope. Considering the significance of the present Sunday, the Old and the New Testament, our calling, our need, our future, let us join in

The Hymn of the Seraphim:

"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts!"

This hymn

- I. *Sounds down from heaven.*
- II. *Echoes in the old covenant Temple.*
- III. *Echoes more strongly in the New Testament Church.*
- IV. *Is the great need of our times.*
- V. *Shall and will fill the whole earth.*

Any theme that centers in the Trinity may be introduced in the manner used by Koegel, by pointing out how the entire Bible, the whole Christian Church, every divine service in its cardinal features, every Christian believer, and all Christian life and hope rest wholly and altogether on the Trinity, and if the Trinity is rejected fall utterly and for ever. In the unfolding of the sermon there should speak to the people, not the voice of a dogmatical professor, but the voice of a preacher who has truly entered into the Holy of this text and has come away impressed by the infinite power, majesty, holiness, and glory of the Son, the Adonay, Yahveh Tzebaoth, who is the supreme Revealer of the Triune God; humbled and crushed by his own sinfulness and that of his people, against which all this infinite power and holiness is for ever set (remember to what Isaiah was called: v. 9-13!); and yet filled with holy joy that this Son reveals God to sinful man, has power to cleanse away and cover sin, and in spite of all sin will fill the whole earth with his glory (in the consummation of the world, which for him is already attained). When we say: no dogmatical professor, we mean no class-room presentation of the Trinity; we do *not* mean: no doctrine. For the whole sermon must rest on the Bible doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and all the light of genuine dogmatics must shine through the presentation. Nor does this exclude polemics of the biblical sort. For our people must be lifted out of the fog, and must come away from the sermon distinctly conscious of the true God, Father, Son, and Holy

Ghost, as their God, with all unitarian notions of God abhorrent to them, and exposed in their lying falseness, in their blasphemous idolatry, and in their total emptiness of salvation and saving power. — A simple theme may be used:

Isaiah's Vision of God.

- I. *He saw the Son in his glory.*
- II. *He heard the adoration of the seraphim.*
- III. *He experienced his wondrous grace.*
- IV. *He was called for his part in filling the whole world with his glory.*

Some preachers are bound to get an ordinary, cheap application from the call of Isaiah: as he was called — so we; which is more untrue, than true. Drop this trite formula. Rise to the Lord's world-plan: "the whole earth full of his glory." Isaiah had his distinct part in that plan. It cost him his life. His living body was sawn asunder with a great wooden saw. Do not fall for chiliasm. Israel as a nation is definitely and finally rejected, v. 9-13; 65, 1, etc. At the last day the whole earth will be glorified, Rev. 21, 1 etc. — In working an analytical outline, analyze less the verses as they stand, and more the substance of the thought presented.

The song of the seraphim is such a marked feature in the text that many a preacher will think of it as a possible sermon theme. We have seen how Koegel treated it. There are still other ways. Hardly, however, the one used by Koelling: I. One "holy" for God the Father; II. One "holy" for God the Son; III. A third "holy" for God the Holy Ghost. On this he speaks following the Creed: the Father as Creator, the Son as Redeemer, the Spirit as Sanctifier. Too common, too formal, and too dogmatical in form. — Take the entire seraphic hymn:

**"Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts:
The Whole Earth Full of His Glory!"**

- I. *What a vision of God!*
- II. *What a view of the earth!*
- III. *What a call for our souls!*

In the first part describe the glory of the Son on his throne in the attributes indicated by the text — the Son, equal in glory with the Father and the Spirit (here the full Trinity)

—the only God; the horror of denying him and any part of his glory — our prostration, adoration, heavenly joy in his revelation. In the second part tell of the purpose of this revelation amid the seraphim — to Isaiah as a chosen prophet — the world-plan centering in the Son — grace and the Word amid all this sin — the consummation: a new earth full of God's glory. In the third part show the blind world of men hastening to the judgment of the All-holy One — let this revelation separate you from them — cast yourself down in repentance, be cleansed, and turn your heart to the consummation of the great day.



THE TRINITY CYCLE

Synopsis

Of the Entire Trinity Cycle.

The Godly Life.

I. The Vital Feature of the Godly Life.

1. Rooted in the Lord God and his Word.
2. Nourished and fed at the table of divine Wisdom.
3. Full of the joy of salvation.
4. Headed for heaven.
5. Pressed by affliction, yet trusting in the Lord's comfort.
6. A complete picture of the man having the Godly Life.
7. The proper home environment of the Godly Life.

II. The Worst Dangers in the Godly Life.

8. The danger of false prophets.
9. The danger of false independence.
10. The danger of final unbelief.

III. The Chief Traits of the Godly Life.

11. A penitent heart.
12. Open ears and seeing eyes.
13. Good works.
14. Genuine Worship.
15. Freedom from care.
16. Help in tribulation.
17. Humbleness.
18. Unworldliness.

IV. The Greatest Gifts of the Godly Life.

19. The forgiveness of sins.
20. Spiritual wisdom.
21. The promise concerning Christ and the Church.
22. An assured future.
23. All the spiritual blessings of salvation.

V. The Blessed Close of the Godly Life.

24. The brevity of our earthly lives.
 25. The resurrection of the body.
 26. The joy of final deliverance.
 27. Our anticipation of the blessed hereafter.
- Reformation: "A Tower of Strength."

Note. — In this volume all the twenty-seven texts for the Trinity Cycle are completely worked out, and in addition the text for the Reformation Festival. Since, however, the calendar so often does not list as many as twenty-seven after-Trinity Sundays, some of these twenty-seven texts must be omitted. It would be a serious mistake to cut off all that may not be needed in any one Church Year, from the end of the Cycle. That would be a miserable mutilation of the cycle. Take your calendar when you begin the cycle, and note how many texts will have to be omitted in that year. Then survey the entire twenty-seven texts, and check out from the various sub-cycles the individual texts that have to be dropped to accord with the number of Sundays on the calendar. Three, four, and even five texts may thus be dropped, one from this and one from that sub-cycle, without any mutilation whatever. It is the only proper thing to do with a fine coordinated cycle like the one before us.

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Deut. 6, 4-13

What we said at the beginning of the festival half of the Church Year we ought to recall now in beginning the non-festival half, namely that it is not a new road we are about to travel, but one well known to us from the old gospel texts for the Church Year. But while it is the same road, there *is* a newness about it. The after-Trinity season, with its long array of twenty-seven Sundays, always has to do with **the Godly Life**. In the Eisenach gospels this is presented as the Life of the Christian in the Kingdom. Naturally, since that Kingdom dates from the fulness of time when Christ came, our Old Testament after-Trinity series presents the life of the child of God in its old covenant setting. The gospels show that life in all the richness Christ has actually brought; our Old Testament texts show that life in the richness promised in the Christ to come. And that is the newness. In these text we walk in the refreshing dawn, with the full sun not yet risen, while in the gospels we walk in the full day, all the sunlight shining about us. Yet more should be said. The texts are like the dawn, the sermon must be brighter. This for the simple reason that we are not now living in the time of these texts. The texts are of the early covenant, we ourselves of the later covenant. That means that the fuller light of the New Testament must illumine these texts for us. From our vantage point of glorious fulfillment we view these early texts of precious promise. We note indeed all that the promise held, but we see the blessedness of all this promise in the light of the great fulfillment we now enjoy. So it is the old road,

and yet it appears attractively new. — Let us observe, too, that in the selection of texts here offered there are none, as we may put it, strictly Jewish. The Levitical regulations have all been abrogated; hence we have here no text that repeats what has been set aside in the new covenant. We have only texts that contain the permanent elements of that early covenant. While these elements appear in their ancient setting, almost automatically we read them now so that their contents apply to us to-day. God's grace, pardon, help, etc. are in substance identical for all men of all times. The cross and tribulation, the Lord's comfort, and the hope set before us, are all one, whatever their covenant coloring. With this plain to us, the language of these texts, while old and thus carrying a new tone for us in the pulpit, are the same voice of God we have heard in gospel and epistle texts heretofore.

The twenty-seven after-Trinity texts are not one unbroken level line. That would make the series monotonous. These texts, like the Eisenach gospels, fall into five sub-cycles. The first group has seven, the second three, the third eight, the fourth five, and the last four.* The selection of the texts is quite free, yet a fair number of them are more or less parallels to the old line gospel texts. But the very first one in the whole series, Deut. 6, 4-13, is not suggested by any other text in any other series for this Sunday. It, like others, in this after-Trinity line, is chosen for its place because it fits that place so well. The godly life flows from one source only, and is kept strong and vital by one means only, the divine Thorah, the word of God.

We shall discuss each sub-cycle in the after-Trin-

* A. Pfeiffer's division, making four groups of five texts each, to which the final group of seven on the consummation of the godly life is appended, is impossible, as the texts themselves prove.

ity line as we reach it. The first sub-cycle with its seven texts, presents *the Vital Features of the Godly Life*. In the first place this Life is *rooted in the Lord God and his Word*, Deut. 6, 4-13, and thus has his blessing, The First Sunday after Trinity. — Next, it is *nourished and fed at the table of divine Wisdom*, Prov. 9, 1-10, The Second Sunday after Trinity. There is a fine similarity between this text and the old line gospel text, which is the parable of the Great Supper. — It is furthermore *full of the joy of salvation*, Is. 12, The Third Sunday after Trinity: “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” — The Godly Life is always *headed for heaven*, Is. 65, 17-19 and 24-25, The Fourth Sunday after Trinity. — And yet the Godly Life is marked by tribulation and the cross. Though *pressed by affliction it trusts in the Lord’s mercies*, Lam. 3, 22-33, The Fifth Sunday after Trinity. — Then we have *the complete picture of the blessed man who has the Godly Life*, Ps. 1, The Sixth Sunday after Trinity. There is a possible hint in this text of the beginning of the old gospel text, Matth. 5, 20: “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,” etc.—And paralleling Ps. 1, which centers our attention on the individual godly man, we see Jerusalem, “The holy people,” “The redeemed of the Lord,” the City “Sought out,” as the *proper home and environment of the Godly Life*, Is. 62, 6-12. This first sub-cycle is certainly well arranged. The features indicated are all vital. No life is godly that is not centered in Jehovah and his Word, feeds on his Wisdom, rejoices in his salvation, is headed for heaven, trusts under trials in his mercy, thus resembles the blessed man described in the First Psalm, and has its home in the City “Sought out.”

In approaching the text for The First Sunday after Trinity it is well to read carefully all that precedes from chapter five on. Moses here repeats the

law, and then expounds its true sense, adding necessary application. The exposition deals in particular with the First Commandment which is basic for the whole law. The explanation which Moses makes of it in v. 4-5 of our text forms the classic expression and summary of all truly godly life in the old covenant. It stands out as such all through Jewish history. More than this, Jesus took it up in the New Testament and placed it into the new covenant setting, as the abiding summary of all truly godly life in the Christian era. Thus the beginning of our text brings us what we may call the very heart of all godly life and living in all ages. — Now the entire text must be classed as law in contradistinction to the Gospel. While this is formally correct, it should not lead to a misunderstanding on the part of the preacher when he comes to build a sermon on this text. He is not to preach simply law on this Sunday. But that does not mean that he is to add to the text, to go way beyond it, to bring in what is actually the opposite of this text, namely the Gospel. Quite the contrary. This text requires that he preach the Gospel. While its substance is indeed law, this text cannot be understood and properly expounded, except as we understand that it is here recorded by Moses for a people possessed of the Gospel. Israel had the patriarchal covenant given, as St. Paul writes Gal. 3, 17, 430 years before the law came. The law for Israel was thus superadded. Israel was chosen by God in free grace, was blessed with the great Gospel promise, and after that was given the law. Let us keep these historical facts in mind, as did St. Paul in Galatians. This already indicates how our text is to be used in preaching to a Christian congregation. The preacher has people before him who are children of God in Christ Jesus. He is to tell them how they are to lead the godly life. He can do it admirably by means of this great Old Testament text. — Besides this

historical setting for our text, which as we shall see is also fully regarded by Moses himself, there is an obvious doctrinal relation. The chief injunction in our text is love. Now love is to follow faith. Only the true believer can love God. As the text stands it is addressed to such believers, and points out to them how love as the fruit of faith is the heart of the godly life. To be sure, when used as a mirror, this text also reveals sin, and may thus be employed to prepare the way unto faith by leading those far from God to repentance. Likewise, it may be used on Christians in showing them the sin still in them, that they may overcome the flesh by repentance. The sermon may use the text also in this manner. But its main use will be that of a rule, namely to show those who believe how they should abound in love and thus in godly living. — We add one more thought on the way to view and handle this text. We are using the Old Testament now, hence the godly life is presented to us in the manner of the Old Testament by its greatest representative Moses. He does it by means of the supreme commandment of the law, namely that which requires the love of God. While that is the Old Testament manner in its purest and most exalted form, it is at the same time in no way foreign to the New Testament. For to this day, as all the evangelists and apostles testify love is the expression of the godly life in the Christian Church. We love God because he first loved us. God is love, and none are godly save those who truly love him. The Old Testament manner can thus be transmuted without the slightest difficulty into the New Testament manner; for at heart they are one.

4. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5. And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Moses makes the most impressive kind of announcement, hence the call: **Hear, O Israel.** Right here faith is required which St. Paul in Rom. 10 tells us comes by hearing. Our text is not addressed to a set of non-believers or unbelievers. It is addressed to "Israel," so named by its name of honor as in the covenant of the patriarch Israel. This very name is a call and admonition for this people to live up to its name as true believers like Jacob of old. That old name "Israel" is like our name now when we love to call ourselves, and to be called, Christians. — What Moses bids Israel to hear is not something new or novel which they have never heard before. Israel was Israel because they believed in the Lord their God, and believed that he alone was the Lord. The announcement of Moses is in the nature of a necessary reminder. Faith needs these repetitions. It is to bethink itself and of the everlasting Rock on which it rests. — What Moses bids Israel to hear is not an abstract proposition on the oneness of God. The very name used for God is personal: **the LORD our God.** It is he who had revealed himself to Israel, *Yahveh*, "I Am That I Am," the unchanging covenant Lord, *'Elohenu*, the God of all power and might, and, as the possessive shows, he who employs his power in behalf of Israel. Really this grand name is Gospel. For the covenant was one of grace, hence Gospel, and necessarily then, too, the covenant name *Yaveh*. And the possessive "our" combined with *'Elohim* is a second expression of grace, denoting the loving connection and association into which the great God, the Almighty, had entered into with Israel as his own people. — The Hebrew needs no copula. And the predicate is: **one LORD, one Yahveh.**" The thought is not: *Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone,*" for, as Keil explains, this requires *l'baddo*, instead of *'echad*. Nor is the predicate merely the word "one," as if we should read: "Jehovah our Lord, namely Jehovah, in one."

"One Jehovah" signifies the only one, the Absolute, the one absolute Lord and God. How Keil can say that the Oneness of God is not stated here is certainly hard to see. All Judaism as well as Christendom has found this Oneness declared here, as over against all polytheism or any duality of gods. To admit that this predicate signifies "the Absolute," as Keil does, beyond question admits the Oneness. Zech. 14, 9 in no way denies this Oneness: "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one." How such a claim can be put up is again hard to see, when in fact Zechariah doubly declares this Oneness. Yet this Oneness in no way conflicts with the Trinity of God, since it is the Oneness of being, not of person. The one God, as we know, has revealed himself as three persons. Yet Moses does not assert merely the bare Oneness. Just as he makes the subject highly personal to Israel, so he does the predicate. Instead of saying: "The Lord our God is *one*," he says: "*one* LORD." There are other gods, many of them, each of whom, too, is one. So it would be saying very little of Israel's God, even when mentioning his full name, to call him "one" also. There might even be the false implication that he was the one for this nation as other nations also have, each of them, one god. No; Moses writes: **one** LORD, **one** *Yahveh*, a thing that cannot be said of any other god. All these other gods, while each of them may be one, are, none of them, *Yahveh*, able to make or keep a covenant, for they are each and all nonentities, sham gods, minus reality, dead figures, non-living, idols. Israel's God is the one *Yahveh*, and there is this one alone in all the universe, and no other. So in the true God the absolute Oneness of being is united with Jehovah character.—Thus Moses puts the Gospel first for his people, and then he adds the law. This Gospel supplies the supreme motive and power for the keeping of the Great Commandment of the law. Be-

believing as Israel does in such a God and Lord, how can they help but obey him in love? Living in his blessed covenant, rejoicing in his great covenant promises and in the hopes based on them, how can they help but revere and love him? Let the preacher keep this connection in mind, and he will not preach a barren law sermon, but law and Gospel combined as Moses and all the Scriptures combine them. It is a pity that so many commentators fail to bring out this vital point. But their lack of vision is no excuse for us.

Now follows the commandment: **And thou shalt love the LORD thy God.** Grammatically this *v^e* coordinates, as we use "and." But the second member in the coordination really rests on, depends on, flows from the first member. If this God were not what he is, the one LORD, Israel could not love him. Once more we have his full name. But now as the supreme object of our love. The verb *'ahab*, piel, means "to love," and is used of conjugal and parental love, as also of love between friends. Josh. 22, 5 adds the explanatory idea: "to cleave unto him." The basic idea seems to be: *aspirare ad aliquem*. This love is conceived here as a fixed and permanent state, an inclination of the whole inner being toward the Lord God. A love is meant in which all longing and desire knowingly and willingly aspires to the Lord God. This love is to be the life-element in which Israel as a people and each individual Israelite moves. Just as God devotes himself as Jehovah of the covenant to Israel, so Israel's love is to be the answering devotion to the Lord God. As he betrothed himself to Israel, so Israel is to live and act as his betrothed. To use New Testament language: as he is our Father in Christ Jesus, loving us with the divine love of fatherhood, so we are to love him in turn as his devoted children in Christ Jesus. — And this our love is to be complete, exhausting all our being: **with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.** There is to be

nothing halfhearted; no divided devotion; no subtraction of any kind. No other love is to conflict with this love, or in any point or in any degree to lessen it. The **heart** is mentioned first, not merely, as Keil puts it, because it is the seat of the emotions, hence also of love, for *leb* is the center of personal life and power, hence the workshop of our thinking (Koenig), and the source of our willing and volitions, as well as the seat of our feelings and emotions. There should be no restrictions, since with **all** thine heart admits of none. — The **soul**, *nephesh*, is mentioned next to make clearer what is meant by “heart.” If “heart” is the center of personal life and power, “soul” is that personal life and power itself. All our higher functions (intellect, emotions, will) are to cleave to the Lord God (heart); and that means that our very inward being itself (soul) should cleave to him. Again no restrictions or subtractions, hence: with **all** thy soul. No small corner in it shall be closed to the Lord God. — Finally the **might**, *m^eod*, δύναμις, explains still more what the previous terms mean, especially what “all” embraces. 1) Heart—the inner personal faculties; 2) soul—the personal being itself; 3) might—the inner personal strength of which one is capable. And again **all** means no degree of ability excepted, no effort that we are capable of left out. Yes, this is perfect love, nothing less is. As we receive the completest and most perfect love of the Lord God (pardon the double superlatives), so that love obligates us to a love also complete and perfect, in the measure of our human being and personality. Or, to stay with the text itself, the *one* in “one LORD” demands and requires nothing less than the *all* in our heart, soul, and might. Only if there were a second, or another Jehovah, could there be a division in this “all.” To make such a division now, i. e. to subtract any part of our love from the one Jehovah, is on the face of it wrong, unjustifiable. It is like robbery or theft,

however in that which is supreme. Israel who trusts in the one Jehovah by that very fact recognizes and must recognize this obligation of undivided and perfect love. The question of whether Israel or we, with the flesh still clinging to us, *can* thus love the one LORD, need not be brought in here. Suffice it to say that this LORD himself in his great covenant grace provided for the remission of all the sins due to the flesh still in his people. — Christ calls this “the first and great commandment,” Matth. 22, 38, and rightly so, for from it flow all the other commandments and their fulfillment, as Luther also indicates in his explanation of each of the Ten Commandments. Where the supreme commandment is quoted in the New Testament there is sometimes a substitution or an addition. Thus in Matth. 22, 37 “with all thy mind” for might; in Mark 12, 30 “with all thy mind” added to soul; in Luke 10, 27 “with all thy mind” added to strength; in Mark 12, 33 “with all the understanding” added to heart. These free additions are in the nature of explanations, and show how both in the mind of the learned scribes and of the common people this great commandment had become embedded and had been deeply considered. By *διάνοια*, “mind,” is meant the wide range of thinking with a view to action: *omni studio atque contentione*, Grotius; and by *σύνεσις*, “understanding,” is meant the power of comprehending and thus adequately guiding action. These terms help to make the true meaning of the commandment clear.

6. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall

be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

By **these words** certainly the preceding verses 4-5 are meant, namely v. 4 with its great Gospel summary in the name of God as "the LORD our God" and its predicate "one LORD," and v. 5 with its great law summary of love. The verb in the clause **which I command thee this day**, is *tsavah*, and means "command" in the sense of *feststellen*, "to set up." It applies to the Gospel part as well as the law part, and should be understood accordingly.— Now "these words" are not to stand there outwardly, written and recorded perhaps, and no more; nor are they to be held only in the memory and mind as something that is only known; they are to be a most intimate personal possession, they **shall be in thine heart**. Like a prized treasure they are thus to be pressed to each Israelite's bosom. More than that; filling the "heart" they are to govern and control the whole life. Recall that *leb* is the center of the personality, including thinking, feeling, and willing. The only proper place for words like "these words" is in the "heart" thus understood. What other right place could be found for them? Just as there is something inevitable in the connection between "one Yahveh" and the complete and exclusive love for him, so there is something inevitable in this second connection between "these words" and their place "in thine heart." "Thine" formally refers back to "Israel," a collective term for the nation; and yet this singular as used in v. 6-9 really addresses each Israelite as an individual, in particular each father and householder. In v. 10 etc. this singular "thou," as the predicates show, is addressed to both Israel as such and to the individuals making up the nation.— The basic thing is put first, namely these words shall be in thine heart, by faith

and obedience. Then follow the specifications: **And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.** The piel of *shanan* means "to whet" or "to sharpen." To teach diligently means to impress in a pointed, lasting, thorough manner. "These words" are to be inculcated into the children, so that from earliest days on the hearts of the children shall be filled and controlled by them. This is what St. Paul has put into the injunction to the fathers (and mothers) to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Eph. 6, 4. Note well that the Lord through Moses and St. Paul lays this duty on the fathers as their supreme obligation toward their children. Others, like teachers in school and church may aid the fathers, but in all the Scriptures there is no idea of any father delegating this obligation to others, letting others attend to it for him. The very idea is unbiblical, although many parents act on it. — How the father is to carry out this general obligation of sharpening these words for his children is now specified in detail: he is to keep at it constantly: **and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house.** That is first: the house or home is to be a constant training school with the father as teacher and disciplinarian. In a hundred ways, as occasion after occasion rises in the home, this inculcation is to continue. — **And when thou walkest by the way,** away from home, on the road, in travel far and near. Walking was the ancient mode of travel. — The continuousness of this sharpening is brought out by adding: **and when thou liest down,** at the close of day, **and when thou risest up,** at the start of a new day. The children are to go to bed, with these words testing all they have said and done during the day and bringing them back at evening into this safe harbor; and they are to begin a new day with these words to guide them in all that they shall say and do during the day. Here is the principle of evening and morning worship

in the home as part of the priestly obligation of the father.

So the Israelite and every godly man is to grow up in the basic truths of God's religion. The normal effect will then follow all through his life, as this is now described. **And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.** An *'oth* is a sign of recognition. To have "these words" as "a sign" upon the hand means that every act of the hand is so to be governed by "these words" that men who see us are able to note it and to tell that we love the Lord. By *totaphoth* is meant something to give a straight and true direction to the eyes (Koenig). Note that the verb "thou shalt bind" does not govern the *totaphoth* in the second clause. So the eyes which guide the whole body are to have a directive, one that keeps a man in the true course, and that for all men to see and note that he follows this true course from love of the Lord, and no other course. That v. 8 is meant figuratively is evinced by the words themselves and their obvious meaning, and is put beyond question by Prov. 3, 3: "Bind them (mercy and truth) about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart." Cf. v. 21; 4, 21; 7, 3. — The Talmudists read v. 8 as a requirement to tie "these words" actually upon the hand and between the eyes by means of a band. Only the Karaites, who rejected the traditions, held to the figurative meaning. Thus the *tephillim* or phylacteries, Matt. 23, 5 came to be invented and used since the exile. They were quite curious. A little cube of wood received three incisions as deep as the last joint of the little finger is thick. This made four projections. A piece of well soaked leather from a Levitically clean animal was pressed into the three notches and the sides drawn over the edges of the cube, and allowed to dry. When the cube was withdrawn, there were four small compartments in the leather. Into these, four

tiny pieces of parchment were inserted inscribed with these four passages, Deut. 11, 13-21; 6, 4-9; Ex. 13, 3-10; 3, 11-16, placing them in this order, each piece of parchment rolled up and wrapped in calf's hairs. This little leather receptacle received a base made of two thicknesses of leather, with an edge about one fourth of an inch high, and a tiny noose on one side, through which a long black leather band was passed as broad as a grain of barley. With this band the receptacle was tied so that it rested between the eyebrows, one end of the band coming over the right shoulder down as far as the navel, the other over the left shoulder as far as the chest. Such were the *tephillim sehel rosch*, for the head. The *tephillim sehel jad*, for the hand where thimble shaped, with one compartment and one piece of parchment inscribed in four columns with the same passages, likewise closed at the base with leather and carrying a noose. By means of a narrow band this receptacle was fastened on the inner side of the left arm opposite the heart, and the rest of the band was wound thrice around the arm and then drawn down to the little finger and wound around the three middle fingers. Jesus scored the Pharisees who made these phylacteries broad and prominent. — Just as v. 8 is meant figuratively and spiritually, so also v. 9: **And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.** There is a progress of thought from v. 7-9: from childhood to independent manhood, and from single deeds (hand) to the course of life (directive for the eyes), and to the house or family of the Israelite. To place actual inscriptions of a godly nature upon houses is not commanded here, yet if this is done as an aid to godly living it is not in disharmony with Moses' injunction. But the Jews invented *mesusa*. A parchment was inscribed with Deut. 6, 4 etc. and 11, 13 etc., rolled together, and inscribed on the outside with the name Shaddai, slipped into a round receptacle and placed in an opening in

the right door post, or above the door. In leaving or entering the *mesusa* were touched with the fingers after kissing them, while Ps. 121, 8 was spoken.

10. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, 11. And houses full of good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; 12. *Then* beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 13. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

These verses present the negative elaboration to match the positive in v. 6-9. Note how the warning: **beware lest thou forget the LORD**, is the opposite of "these words . . . shall be in thine heart," v. 6. — Moses speaks concretely and graphically about the coming time now not far distant. His words are prophetic, yet the fulfillment is now looming up, rich and glorious, close at hand. It is **the LORD thy God** that will soon do what is here pictured, that means he who keeps his covenant and does it with his might. — *Nishba'* is the participle from *shaba'* and with *l'* signifies "sworn unto," i. e. promised under oath. The Lord is about to carry out that sworn promise. The three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are named in order to recall to Israel all the covenant promises made to them in regard to Canaan. Note well that this pointed and specified reference is Gospel, and as such, just as v. 4, presents the real inner motive for Israel's loving remembrance of the Lord. — Now follow the graphic details of what Israel shall possess in Canaan: **great and goodly cities, . . . houses**

full of all good, . . . wells digged, . . . vineyards and olive trees. This is wealth in realty. But with each specification there is brought out the point placed significantly at the head of the list: **to give thee**, *latheth*, the infinitive *theth* from *nathan*, "to give" or present: these cities **thou buildest not**, and so on through the list. There is a true Gospel appeal in these additions. These great, rich gifts are evidences of the Lord's covenant love, and call for an answering love on Israel's part, a love filled with deepest gratitude, and the desire to honor, praise, please, and obey this Lord. — Moses might have stopped with this catalog of great gifts, but he adds a word more personal still, one which describes Israel's condition amid all this wealth: **when thou shalt have eaten and be full**. Living in abundance they shall again and again feast on the good things the Lord has given them and be filled. But that is the very time most dangerous for Israel as well as for others. It is a strange trait of human nature: when our table is scant we think of the Lord, but when it groans with viands we are inclined to forget him. Wealth tends to pride, self-exaltation, independence of God, forgetfulness of his love and kindness from which all blessings flow.

Now follows the conclusion: **beware**, *hishshamer*, the niphal from *shamar* with *l'ka*, *huete dich ja*. "do take care" or watch thyself. The thing to guard against is introduced by *phen*, "lest," or "that not." The danger is that the very abundance may make Israel **forget the LORD**, i. e. not to connect him in the heart with all this abundance now showered upon Israel. What such forgetting may imply, and likely would in Canaan, is mentioned in v. 14: "go after other gods," the worst form of forgetting. — A relative clause brings out by implication the enormity of the ingratitude in thus forgetting: **who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of**

bondage, literally: "from the house of bondmen." Once Israel was a nation of slaves. What a contrast: slaves in Egypt—lords and masters in Canaan! Slaves under a galling yoke of servitude—lords at banquet tables! Who had wrought the change? Yahveh with his covenant, grace, and might. And to forget him when now he had wrought the change would be despicable indeed.

At once Moses adds in contrast what Israel should do in its prosperity. **Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God.** We see at once that "fear," *yare'*, cannot be a fearing conflicting with the love enjoined in v. 5. It is not slavish, but filial fear, namely the reverence and awe which dreads to do anything against the Lord's will. It is really the negative side of deep, worshipful love to the Lord. For he who thus loves dreads to say or do what will grieve or offend the one loved. This is clearly indicated by the object of *yare'*, namely *Yahveh 'Eloheha*, the Gospel name of God.—Fear is for the heart. Then follows conduct: **and serve him**, *'abad*, namely with all manner of obedience. The service of the Lord is peculiar in that by it he is not benefitted in his person, all the benefit going to those who do the serving. It is not essential to the Lord that we exert ourselves in loving fear to serve him, as he can do without servants what he wills; but it is essential to us to give ourselves in love and reverence to his service, for in that alone is life and salvation for us. Luther very correctly and wisely put fear and love at the head in the explanation of each of the commandments as the true motive prompting the obedience asked. There is nothing servile in this serving, nothing compulsory, nothing work-righteous. It is the service that is natural and normal for the godly man, an outflow of his faith and love, with fear and reverence as the negative counterpart, done to please God, and wholly directed by his will.—The addition, making up the trio: **and shalt swear by**

his name, comes as a surprise. But that is in part due to a faulty conception of the preceding term "serve." This includes as its chief part the worship of the Lord. When that is held fast, these three will be found to be in line: fear — serve — swear. For *thishshabe'a*, niph'al from *shaba'*, "shalt swear," is an act of worship, and to do this "by his name" an act of worship of the Lord. The silent implication is: not by some other name, i. e. of some false god. This is one of the biblical proofs for the permission of proper oaths. Keil thinks the reference here is to oaths, not only in court, but also in common life. But we prefer the exposition of Jesus: "Swear not at all" in common life, let yea and nay be enough. The Jewish oath was: "As the Lord liveth," Jer. 4, 2. Oaths were and are permissible when God's honor, our neighbor's need, or the government require us to swear. In common life God's honor and our neighbor's need are sufficiently taken care of by ordinary affirmation and negation. Even when the government asks us to swear, the godly man will not at once comply, but will consider well whether the oath thus required meets also the other two requirements. When secret orders ask oaths, none of these three points are met. In fact such oaths mark an unwarranted usurpation on the part of the secret orders, as if they had authority similar to that of the government. The godly man cannot consent to such usurpation; he would make himself partaker of the sin of those who usurp such authority. Moreover, when he does swear before proper authorities it is in the name of the true God, not in the name of the false god self-invented by the secret orders. Proper swearing is thus a confession of the Lord and his name, public and solemn, an acknowledgment of the Lord's truth and power, and an appeal to both. Thus Christ made oath, and gave us an example of how this word of Moses is to be fulfilled.

SUGGESTIONS

A good many sermons on this text treat only of "The Greatest and Most Prominent Commandment" (Langsdorff's theme), or of "The Chief Commandment in the Law" (Fritzsche's theme). This sounds too much like just law. We have already pointed to the Gospel in this text; let us not lose that. The first text on the Godly Life dare not be mere law, not even its chief part. Luther gives us good guidance here: "That there is a God profits us nothing, but that he be considered God, and our God, that is salvation and life and the fulfillment of all commandments. This first explanation of the First Commandment refers to faith. For no one can have a God except he cling to him alone, rely on him alone, otherwise we shall be drawn to all kinds of works and invent many gods. The second explanation refers to love, and follows from the first. For if we understand that all things flow from him, there necessarily follows sweet love. In v. 4 he awakens all our trust, in v. 5 he brings forth glad and voluntary service of God. Thus we receive through the unity of God by faith all things freely from God, by love we do all things willingly for God." This is the right correlation of Gospel and law, of faith and love. We may outline as follows:

The Godly Life Centers in the Lord our God!

That means:

- I. *Faith in the One Lord.*
- II. *Love with the whole heart.*
- III. *Reverence for his name (v. 13).*
- IV. *Life in his service.*
- V. *Blessing from his hand.*

The slight synthesis in III., using v. 13 before v. 7-12, will be found quite natural.—Another simple treatment runs as follows:

Moses' Outline of the Godly Life.

- I. *Its center is faith and love.*
- II. *It begins in a godly home.*
- III. *It unfolds in all godly conduct.*
- IV. *It is graced by God's blessing.*

As one meditates on this text and its application to our times one feels at once how pertinent is almost every line. For how little is the true God known, believed, confessed. Love of self in open worldly fashion fills the place of love to the Lord

God. How few are governed by the Word? Among the most deplorable phenomena are the irreligious homes and children spiritually paupers. Look at men's hands, see which way their eyes look, and note the character of the houses in which they dwell. Wonderful outward prosperity indeed, but this very wealth helps to cause the fatal forgetfulness. Men fear men, not God; serve self, not the Lord; and their very oaths, so many of them false, or contrary to the Word, or sinful in other ways, betray the defection from God. Here is sermon material enough, and more than enough. Nor is it hard to use; simply set the positive over against this negative. But be sure to use the Gospel remedy when applying the law, and do not make the sermon a mere moral lecture or legal indictment, trying to "reform" men by means of the law. — Introduction: Once Moses cried: "Hear, O Israel!" Eventually they would not hear. Israel is gone to-day, completely rejected by the Lord. That call to Israel still stands in Holy Writ, that we men of to-day may hear and heed it.

Listen, as Moses Cries: "Hear, O Israel!"

Hear what he says concerning:

- I. *Gospel faith in the one Lord.*
- II. *Genuine love for the Lord God.*
- III. *Inward regard for the Lord's Word (v. 6).*
- IV. *True spiritual training of children.*
- V. *Godly lives governed by the Lord (hands, eyes, houses, v. 8-9).*
- VI. *Great prosperity forgetting God.*
- VII. *And the fear of God that serves him alone and honors his name.*

Or we may use a line of thought like this: It is foolish to doctor symptoms, by tinkering with outward reforms, enactment of more laws (far too many already). Get at the root of things. Go after the heart. Put the Lord's Gospel into it.

**The Gospel Remedy of Moses: The Lord our God
Is One Lord!**

- I. *It changes the heart.* Puts into it faith in the Lord as our one Savior; love for him as the fruit of faith; filial fear of him as a bar against sin and wrong.
- II. *It remakes the life.* Begins with the child; controls the hand (every single act), and the eyes (the whole life's course); and sanctifies the homes. All that even when outward prosperity would lead us to forget,

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Prov. 9, 1-10

This text at once reminds us of the parable of the Great Supper, the old gospel text for this Sunday. In fact, Jesus may well have had our text in mind when he spoke that parable. But while our text in a manner is the original of the old gospel text for this Sunday, it is not chosen merely for that reason, but because it fits admirably as the second chapter in the Godly Life series. This life, centering as we have seen by faith and love in the Lord God himself, is now shown as *nourished and fed at the table of divine Wisdom*. Yes, this is the second natural and necessary feature of the godly life. The fact that our text resembles the old gospel text is an aid for the preacher. Yet he may need the caution not to stray from Proverbs to Luke, not to let the parable dominate the allegory. — A good account of the book of Proverbs is found in Fausset, *Bible Encyclopedia*, one that does not deny its Inspiration as the moderns do.

One should carefully read all the preceding chapters in which Wisdom speaks her wise words. In chapters eight and nine this personification of Wisdom reaches its climax, especially in 8, 22-36, where the divine nature of Wisdom is fully revealed, and where the actual personality of Wisdom comes clearly to view. We thus see that we are dealing with far more than a mere rhetorical personification of the abstract idea of wisdom, even if it be the idea of the divine attribute of wisdom. This point is usually discussed in connection with chapter eight, though of course the conclusion arrived at counts also for our chapter, and for our text in particular the matter must be settled.

Even Horton in the *Expositor's Bible*, though following the critics to a great degree, feels constrained to say that here we have "a foreshadowing of that wonderful Being who of God is made unto us Wisdom as well as Righteousness . . . though faint and imperfect, very true as far as it goes." For all that, Horton thinks that in the apocryphal book of Wisdom 7, 25-29 there is an advance in the description of this personified Wisdom over Proverbs, and what his ideas concerning Inspiration are we may gather from the fact that he questions the Inspiration of Prov. 8, 23 etc. on the score of presenting old world scientific ideas (which we are ready to challenge), while he would have the apocryphal book of Wisdom included in the canon.* Horton asks in particular regarding our text whether the Lord identified himself with the hypostatic Wisdom here speaking, but leaves the answer doubtful, claiming only that our text must have been in Jesus' mind at the time when he spoke the parable of the Wedding Feast, since in the Greek of the LXX of Prov. 9, 3 the words: "sent forth her bond-servants" are precisely the same as in Matth, 22, 3. Delitzsch, we are sorry to report, follows the old Jew Philo in his speculations: "Wisdom is not God himself, but belongs to God; she has according to New Testament revelation personal being in the Logos, yet is not the Logos himself; she is the world-idea" (this the speculative notion of Philo), "which, once conceived, is objective for God, not as a dead form, but as a living mind picture; she is the original picture of the world, which having arisen from God stands before God, the world in idea, which constitutes the medium between the Godhead and the actual world, the mind power in the origin and completion of the

* It was not included, as Horton thinks, because written in Greek with no Hebrew original, but really because the author was known to lack inspiration.

world as God wanted to have it." All this is Philonic speculation, not Old Testament or New Testament exegesis. Compare the author's *Eisenach Gospel Selections*, I, 116 on John 1, 1, the Logos. Daechsel follows much the same course, although, strange to say, he has the heading for chapter eight: "Concerning the essential Wisdom, the Son of God." Yet after dilating on the Jewish-Alexandrine view and Philo's "world idea" which excludes the Incarnation, he makes bold to say that "to Wisdom is ascribed only the life and significance of a creature of God, though it be the first and most prominent." It is enough to reply, this would be an unheard-of "creature"; and that any creature idea, however counted as "first and most prominent," absolutely excludes the Incarnation. — Let us get out of this miasma into clearer atmosphere. Nitzsch writes: "When the Solomonic Wisdom praises herself, not only that she existed before the world, but also glories that God created, founded, generated her, there is here revealed a divine process, an ontological differentiation in God himself: for she claims to be, not a creature like others, not an angel, not a dependent power or effect, but she desires to be known and revered in her divinity, without exhausting the idea of divinity, she claims to be God from God." Philippi recognizes the difficulty of the question, but declares his assurance that "the result of the investigations set going will be none other that voiced by Nitzsch." Hengstenberg writes on John's Gospel, that in Proverbs the description advances from the personified human wisdom to the personified divine Wisdom. One and the same Wisdom is meant, which appears personified as dwelling in the souls of the godly, and yet at the same time as an actual person is from eternity in and with God, just as in the New Testament along with the most intimate combining of the two there is made a distinction between the impersonal and the personal Word of God, and even the

former is occasionally personified, as in Heb. 4, 12-13. Hence also no argument can be drawn against the actual personality of Wisdom in Prov. 8, 22 etc., from the personification of folly in Prov. 9, 13 etc., as "a foolish woman." — The matter is decided exegetically by what Wisdom says concerning herself, by what she promises and does. This shows that Wisdom is in no sense an abstraction, and certainly not an abstraction that is merely personified rhetorically, so that in English we really should write "wisdom" without a capital. This Wisdom is indeed a divine person, identical with the Logos or Word, as John 1, 1-3, a clear parallel to Prov. 8, 22-31, shows. The old Arian notion that "wisdom" is a creature created before the world, yet not eternal, but with a beginning in time, is unheard of in the Scriptures, and stands utterly condemned by the Arian effort to employ this "creature" in denying the homoousia of the Son. — With this supreme question settled we may discuss our text.

1. **Wisdom hath builded her house,
she hath hewn out her seven pillars;**
2. **She hath killed her beasts;
she hath mingled her wine;
she hath also furnished her table.**
3. **She hath sent forth her maidens:
she crieth upon the highest places of the
city,**
4. **Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither;
as for him that wanteth understanding,
she saith to him,**
5. **Come, eat of my bread,
and drink of the wine *which* I have pre-
pared.**
6. **Forsake the foolish, and live;
and go in the way of understanding.**

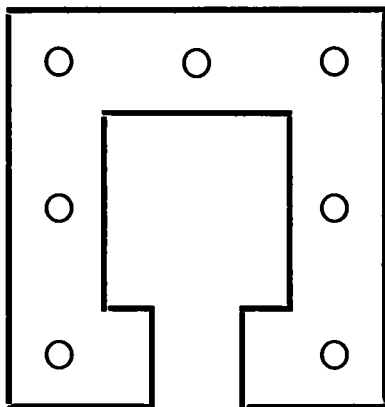
The basic form of the *mashal*, pithy saying, or proverb is a two-line verse. The two thoughts in these two lines may be synonymous, the second saying in different words what the first says; or antithetical, the second negative, or a contrasted thought; or synthetic, the second line containing a thought harmonious with the first; or parabolic, in one of the lines a comparison or figure of speech. But two lines may not be enough; then the composer uses more lines; up to eight. Each *mashal* is complete in itself. In this collection they are strung together like pearls, and of course those more nearly related are grouped together. But the *mashal* idea is expanded still further, into small compositions called *mashal*-songs by Delitzsch. The *mashal* structure is retained, that is the lines are paired, triplicated, etc., but they pass beyond the number eight into little compositions with one general thought. The entire first part of Proverbs, chapters one to nine, is so constructed. Instead of a long string of *meshalim* as in the body of Proverbs we have a collection of *mashal*-songs. In our chapter the first song embraces six verses, and is followed by a second also with six verses. The first song begins with a pair of lines (v. 1), followed by a trio (v. 2), then an octet (v. 3-6), or a double quartet. The whole is a thing of beauty, balanced in word and phrase as well as in the lines, rounded and complete like a gem with many facets, — The second *mashal*-song starts with six lines (v. 7-9). Of these the first two are a synonymous pair, followed by two more also synonymous though negative, and these four followed by two that are antithetical. This sextet is rounded out by the addition of a second sextet (v. 10-12), in which the pivotal idea of the whole is brought out so that the *mashal*-song is complete as a unit. In this sextet of lines the first two are synonymous, the second line only repeating the thought of the first in different words. The second pair of lines, synony-

mous as a pair, is synthetical with the first pair, since it furnishes the proof for what the first pair declares. The last pair is antithetical as a pair, but adds the synthetical thought to the four previous lines that the whole matter of receiving or of scorning wisdom is one of absolute personal responsibility.

Wisdom, the divine person whom we know as the Logos, who in the beginning was with God, and was God, long before the Incarnation came to men to give them light and life and all the blessings that go with both. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." John 1, 4-5. Also v. 18: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." In this sense 1 Cor. 1, 24 calls "Christ . . . the wisdom of God"; and again v. 30, "who of God is made unto as wisdom." While the term and title "Wisdom" is used with reference to the Lord and in relation to the Lord, as Prov. 8, 22 etc. show, yet in our chapter this title is used with reference to us as fallen, sinful, blind, and foolish men. This person is named Wisdom because in this person all the saving knowledge of the Lord God is made available for us. So Wisdom remained not in heaven while we were perishing from folly, but even before the Incarnation descended to earth and established a home here, to dwell and abide here, and to win men unto light, life and blessedness. Wisdom is the translation for the Hebrew plural *Chokmoth*, a plural frequent with psychological terms, and denotes completeness, Wisdom in the supreme degree; the all-comprehensive, absolute Wisdom, Delitzsch; the full embodiment of Wisdom, Boettcher. *Chokmoth* is *pluralis excellentiae*, expressing a manifold unity, hence it has the predicate in the singular. — Now we enter the allegory in which the work and effort of this divine person is sketched as pertaining to men.

This first mashal-song is not a parable, for a parable contains only an extended figure or comparison, without including the interpretation. A parable is woven of only one kind of thread, the figurative. An allegory in the biblical sense has two kinds of thread, that of figure and that of reality or interpretation. In our text "Wisdom" already is not figure, but reality. While in the beautiful allegory John 15, 1-8, the two kinds of thread are interwoven throughout, in our text, beyond the word "Wisdom" at the start, the interpretation is woven in at the end in v. 6. This is less skillful than John 15, still it allows the figurative picture to appear beautiful in its completeness. — So we are told: Wisdom **hath builded her house**, not indeed that she might live there secluded as in a monastery, or be approached and visited only by a few select friends, but that she might extend an invitation far and near to all whom she might induce to come to her entertainment. What is this "house"? Some commentators let us guess. The Hebrew is not: hath builded "for herself a house"; but: "her house," so that it is to be hers already in the process of construction. A. Pfeiffer goes back to chapter 8, 22 etc. for the meaning of "house," and makes it the Cosmos or world. But he forgets that thus he reduces Wisdom to mere natural theology and omits all that lies in "the fear of the LORD" in v. 10, in particular all that makes up the concept *Yahveh*. Now natural theology is part of the written Word, which also tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are seen; but this is only a small part of the full revelation of God. Wisdom as here set forth bestows the true spiritual life, hence includes the Gospel and divine grace. The "house" of Wisdom is thus, not the Cosmos, but the Church, first that of the old covenant, then that of the new. In the Church alone is found

“the fear of the LORD” as “the beginning of wisdom,” and “the knowledge of the holy” which is “understanding,” v. 10. — Wisdom **hath hewn out her seven pillars**, states a synonymous fact, the pillars being part of the house. The Hebrew makes “seven” predicative to “pillars”: “her pillars, namely seven,” *excidit columnas suas ita ut septem essent*. Wisdom makes these pillars number seven purposely. Among the curiosities of exposition is A. Pfeiffer’s notion that these pillars signify the seven days of the week, an idea he gets from Cosmos as the “house.” There has been much guessing as to the pillars. In the first place we must picture an actual ancient house with seven pillars. It is most probable that these supported the flat roof as shown in the diagram:



One pillar was placed at each corner, and one in the middle of each of the three sides. This means a grand house, spacious and palatial, with a broad, inviting entrance, for Wisdom wants many guests. But the number seven has always been considered symbolical, although there has been much guessing both about the significance of the number and the pillars themselves. Seven is composed of three and four,

and three stands for God, four for the world, hence the four corners of the world, and the four directions, north, south, east, and west. This is the simplest solution, for in this wonderful house of Wisdom the Lord God comes to invite all men unto him. Seven is thus symbolic of the union of God with men; seven, the signature of the Church. Hence the candelabra with seven branches in the Temple, the seven golden candlesticks and the seven stars in Revelations, and other symbolic uses of seven. The old church offered among its explanation of the seven pillars the seven gifts of the Spirit. We may refer to Is. 11, 2 where the spirit that came upon Jesus is described. First, "the Spirit of the LORD," like the upright in the sacred candelabra; then three pairs, one arm of each pair on either side of this upright: "the spirit of wisdom" on one side, and to match it on the other the spirit of "understanding"; again "the spirit of counsel," and to match it the spirit of "might"; and once more, and in the same manner, "the spirit of knowledge," and to match it the spirit "of the fear of the LORD." Accordingly Delitzsch, who offers this, makes this house with seven pillars signify the place where Wisdom communes with her admirers, the system of institutions arranged by her for imparting the fulness of her gifts and powers; and the seven pillars the seven potencies of her being by which she imparts herself, also called "seven spirits." — To sum it up: this divine person Wisdom established the Church as a dwelling place among the world of men to offer them life and every blessing; and that Church is upborne by the Holy Spirit and his sevenfold powers, like seven pillars, seven because here God is joined in grace to men.

V. 2 reveals the purpose of this house. It is a banquet hall. Wisdom herself furnishes the feast: **She hath killed her beasts**, lit. "her killing"; **she hath mingled her wine**; **she hath also furnished her table**. Men have done nothing, could do nothing;

it is all grace from God, a pure gift, and since from God, infinitely rich and abundant. There are three lines for this thought, as if to symbolize even by the form the divinity of the grace which is the substance. We at once recall Matth. 22, 4: "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready." As in the parable of Jesus, so in our allegory, we should not ask what "beasts," "oxen" and "fatlings," or "wine" specifically signify. As the chief portions in the feast they make that feast graphic and vivid. The observation should be noted that *tabach* is used for butchering animals for food, while for sacrifice *zabach* is the verb. *Masak yayin* means to mix, not with spices, but with water, so as to make the wine exactly palatable to the drinker. These two activities are preparatory, hence the third *'arak shulchan*, which means setting the table so that the guests may lie down and eat. This table all set with rich viands duly prepared symbolizes all the grace and gifts which Wisdom has to offer to sinful men. This verse is all Gospel, like the one in Matthew 22.

As there were three lines in describing the feast prepared by the Lord, so quite fittingly there are eight lines or twice four in describing the invitation to the feast extended to men: **She hath sent forth her maidens, etc.**, v. 3-4. They are maidens, not men-servants, simply to harmonize with the hostess, Wisdom. The prophets and called servants of the Lord are meant, who are already in his service and help in his work. — In the person of these maidens Wisdom **crieth upon the highest places of the city**, extending her attractive invitation where the most men congregate, at the centers from which the invitation may radiate in all directions. Delitzsch distinguishes *gaph*, "wing," from *gaph*, "ridge," any curved elevation; while Koenig reads *gaph* as "wing" in our passage. The former makes the messengers seek the highest points in the city, the latter the wings or

different sections. We agree with Koenig: Wisdom covers the city, even to the outskirts, with her invitation through her messengers. But A. Pfeiffer reads *gaphphe* of the heights around the city, so that the messengers avoid the city with its business and bustle and call only those who withdraw from it — an exact reversal of the text meaning. No, all are invited.

And now the invitation itself is given in direct form: **Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither, etc.** The invitation, while voiced by the messengers, is that of Wisdom herself. Ringing out among the multitudes it is nevertheless addressed to each individual; for this thing of entering the house of Wisdom and there getting life and blessing is a highly personal matter. Some make a question out of "Whoso is simple?" There is at least a question implied, one that each hearer of Wisdom's invitation should ask himself: "Am I, too, a person that is simple?" The term for "simple," *phethi*, contains the idea of being open to impressions, and is thus used for a person who is inexperienced, who may be easily led astray, and who needs Wisdom to direct him. Note that "the foolish woman" issues identically the same call to the simple. "Whoso is simple," moreover, is no longer figurative, but like the term "Wisdom" part of the reality or interpretation woven into the figurative presentation after the manner of biblical allegory. This simple person is bidden "to turn in hither," *yasur*, the jussive from *sur*, namely into the banquet hall of Wisdom. — A synonymous line follows: **as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, etc.** "Whoso," *mi*, at the head of the previous line need not actually be supplied, so that we would translate: "Whoso wanteth understanding"; yet it is carried in the mind and influences this line. Again the question is suggested: "Am I one that lacks understanding?" Note thus in both lines the direct personal touch and appeal. *Chasar-leb* is a nominative absolute, and means lit-

erally "he that lacks a heart," who is without this seat of thought, emotion, and will, i. e. who does not use it, hence is without understanding and the corresponding intelligent action. For him Wisdom has a message. Here again the interpretation is woven into the figurative language. Compare again v. 16.

In the first line of v. 4 the invitation of Wisdom is put briefly: "let him turn in hither"; now in v. 5 this is amplified: **Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine I have mingled.** Note that now the plural is used: "Come ye, eat ye," etc. This plural can hardly mean, as has been suggested, that the simple person and the person lacking sense are now considered as one class. For the simple one is identical with the senseless one; he is simple because he lacks understanding. These plural verbs follow the singular personal terms to show that, while in the first place the matter is individual and personal, yet *all* who find themselves simple and lacking understanding are here invited. They are all to "come" and enter Wisdom's banquet hall, *leku* the imperative *kal* from *halak*. — To eat of the bread and drink of the wine is to receive true wisdom. It is a bad shot to interpret that first these simple and senseless persons are to be refreshed, and then they are to receive instruction. Compare John 6, 35. The *b^e* with *lechem* and *yayin* is partitive: eat of, drink of. And *lacham lechem* is the same idiom as in v. 2 *tabach tebach*, the verb with its cognate noun. In v. 2 meat is prepared together with wine, and bread is not mentioned. Here in v. 5 bread is mentioned together with wine, and no meat. Of course, this is no contradiction, no lapse on the part of the writer. Yet "bread" is certainly not in the general sense of food (Delitzsch), thus standing for meat. Let us use a little common sense. Meat and wine is certainly not all that is served at a banquet; there will be other food, and certainly also the old staple, namely bread. So in Matth. 22 Jesus speaks

of oxen and fatlings, namely meat, but adds: "all things are ready." — A delightful picture is here presented. Let us not miss the vital suggestions conveyed the while we scrutinize and weigh the words and expressions. Think of it, to receive true spiritual wisdom is like sitting as an honored guest at a grand and delicious banquet. Jesus himself twice used this delectable imagery in his two parables. Thus to get wisdom is a foretaste of heaven, for heaven is pictured as a banquet, *Matth. 8, 11*. How silly, then, for anybody to think that to receive the heavenly Wisdom of the Gospel is a hard and disagreeable thing. The Lord's instruction is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. Here, too, the drawing power of the Gospel call is plainly brought to view. No man can of himself come, believe, and receive. He does not need to, the Lord never expected it, he knew that no man of himself could. This Gospel call has in itself the power to draw, to kindle desire and fan it into action. In actual life there is no such thing as synergism, it is only a figment of foolish theologians who theorize instead of dealing with realities. *Matth. 22* adds a touch left out in our brief allegory, namely that a man might think he is not dressed properly to go to such a grand banquet. Well, the Giver of the banquet furnishes the proper garment for the occasion; it is one of the old oriental ways of doing such things. Nor should we think that the guests are to come only once, eat of the viands, and then go again, the whole thing being ended. No, Wisdom's house is always open, the table always set; and these guests are to continue to enter there, for this house of Wisdom is to be their home hereafter. The Church is not a place for only one visit, but for abiding membership. These are thoughts that lie in this allegory, and the preacher must not overlook them. They are the inside spiritual substance, far better and truer than any notions

brought from the outside and like glaring patches sewed onto this garment of finest silk.

V. 5 is all figure, hence v. 6 is added to furnish the reality for proper interpretation: **Forsake the foolish, and live.** Here we have *ph^etha'yim*, "the foolish," the plural of *phethi*, which is translated "simple" in v. 4. This singular might have been rendered "the foolish one" in v. 4, just as the plural in our verse might have been translated "the simple ones." For to be simple and lack understanding is just nothing else than to be foolish, and vice versa. So this is what it means to enter the house of Wisdom and partake of her viands, namely to part for good and all with the former associates, "the foolish." It is a concrete way of saying that, having found true wisdom we will bid farewell to all our former senseless foolishness. — The addition: **and live**, at once adds the positive idea that is meant. While these men were "simple" and "foolish" and congregated with their kind, they were really spiritually dead, far from the source of true life, namely Wisdom and the Son of God ("I am . . . the life," John 14, 6). Now as dwellers in the house of Wisdom they are to live and to associate as fellows with all the other living ones. Right here note again the underlying thoughts. Who wants to be senseless? What is there attractive in being dead? Think of the joy of spiritual and true life? How it ought to draw, win, and hold us, this offer and gift of life! — The synonymous line makes all this fuller and at the same time clearer: **and go in the way of understanding.** The foolish are not found on this straight and narrow way, they crowd each other on the broad way that leads to destruction. So this going on the right way is the positive side of the negative injunction to forsake the company of the foolish. But this going on the way of understanding is the complement of truly living. He who is spiritually alive shows it by walking the way of life.

Derek is used constantly as a course of action or mode of life, here of the proper course, elsewhere of the evil course. While *derek*, "way," is figurative, this figure is incidental in the interpretation, and is not part of the figure of the allegory. So, please do not mix up the imagery of the "way" and of walking thereon, with the figure of "the house" and the banquet. — The verb *'ashar* is poetical for walking, the German *schreiten*. — As throughout, so here, a modifier characterizes *derek*; here it is *binah*: the way "of understanding," of insight. It matches the idea in *Chokmoth*, Wisdom. To have true insight and to let it direct all our life is to be spiritually wise. This understanding or insight is the inner knowledge of the truth, namely reality. The foolish walk amid a vain show, amid shams, delusions, lies, unrealities foolishly thought to be realities. In their actions and lives they think that is so which is not so, and that is not so which after all is so. They think all is well with them, when all is ill; and when they are warned that all is ill with them, they do not admit and believe it. So also when they are told how it may be truly well with them, they think that is not so. They mistake truth for a lie, and trust a lie as truth. Now *binah* does the reverse; it sees the realities just as they are, and recognizes the unrealities for exactly what they are. It does this under the guidance and teaching of Wisdom. Nor is this insight merely an intellectual thing. It could not be this to be really insight or *binah*. That would make it a kind of foolishness after all. While in part a thing of the mind, it is far more, a thing of the heart, a light and power of the soul. For it is the inner illumination growing out of the spiritual life itself. St. Paul calls it "the eyes of your understanding enlightened," Eph. 1, 18, and thus the fruit of faith, v. 15. — Thus the allegory is complete. The figure of Wisdom's house, banquet,

and invitation is explained right in connection with that figure.

7. **He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame:**
and he that rebuketh a wicked *man* getteth himself a blot.
8. **Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee:**
rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.
9. **Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser:**
teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning.
10. **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:**
and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

The allegory is at an end, and must not be pressed to include this second mashal-song, v. 7-12, or any part of it. Here we have realities without an interwoven figure. Wisdom here explains her own work, and at the same time justifies it. While her doors are open to all men, and she is anxious to lead them all to life and spiritual blessing, her work by the very nature of its character and the condition of men is restricted. We have heard how her messengers and agents invite the simple and those that lack understanding. In a way all men are embraced in this class, and yet some have advanced beyond this general state. They are here called the scorners and the wicked. **A scorner**, *lets*, is one who mocks and derides things religious and divine, *ein Freigeist*, a free thinker; while *rasha'* is a wicked man active in wicked deeds. **Yoser, he that reproveth**, from *yasar*, "to discipline," has the idea of punishing by confronting him with his mockery. **Mokiach, he that rebuketh**, from

yakach, "to determine as a judge," hence to fault one when he is wrong, has the idea of reproaching or blaming. The verbs are used as synonyms. Both efforts are worse than useless. The one who tries to discipline a scorner only **getteth to himself shame, qalon**; he is disgraced by the shameful vilification he will receive in turn. And again, he that faults a wicked rascal getteth **himself a blot, mumo**, from *mum*, a moral stain or spot. But the English in the second line is inexact. This second line has no verb and reads: he that extends rebuke to the wicked man, it (the very action namely of doing so) is a moral stain for him. However good the intention may be, it is nevertheless a moral mistake. — The two lines contain general principles: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you," Matth. 7, 6; comp. Acts 13, 45-46. The interpretation, that these lines are addressed only to those who have begun to learn wisdom, and now in their zeal go out to convert mockers and rascals, is incorrect. They are meant of Wisdom herself and of all her followers, whether zealous beginners or old experienced followers. What Wisdom tells others not to do, she herself avoids doing. When men reach certain stages of wickedness the only thing left for them is judgment and penalty. They may not break even under that; then they are irrevocably lost.

V. 8 in its first line merely restates the thought of the two lines in v. 7: **Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee**; and this restatement is in order to place over against it the opposite: **rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee**. To touch a scorner with words of wisdom is only to make the hatred in his heart against wisdom, and therefore also against anyone who voices this wisdom, flare up viciously. It is like poking a fire; instead of going out it flames up and the sparks fly. So why do it? — A wise man not only

receives rebuke, i. e. blame when he is wrong, but will actually love him who thus corrects him. There is a double side to this statement: 1) be wise yourself, and show it by accepting rebuke for your faults, mending your ways accordingly, and thanking the man who rebukes you; 2) spend your efforts on the wise man, not on the hopeless scoffer and evildoer. There is no selfish appeal in the words: "and he will love thee," for the *v^e*, "and," is not final: "in order that," but consecutive of result: "and." — And there is reason for this love of the wise man: **Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser**, or "be wise the more." This is the wonderful law in the spiritual domain: *habenti dabitur*. "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly," Matth. 13, 12; 25, 29. *Then* is the imperative from *nathan*, "to give"; and its correlative is *leqach*, "to receive." After *then* we may supply *leqach*, namely "knowledge." The man who is spiritually wise appreciates any addition to his wisdom, hence loves the man who imparts it, though it be by rebuke. — A synonymous statement strengthens the thought: **teach a just man, and he will increase in learning**. Wisdom makes a man "just" or righteous, *tsaddiq*; and since the term is used by Wisdom it must mean just and righteous in God's sight. Even if "just" is taken to mean: just in his conduct (*justitia acquisita*), we must remember that back of this lies the new life of justification (*justitia imputata*). *Hoda'*, the *hiphil* from *yada'*, means to teach by letting one know or realize. The effect will be that you increase his "learning" or knowledge, *leqach*; here his spiritual knowledge is meant, both the moral parts of it and the points that deal with faith, the new life, and salvation. And here again 1) be just yourself, accept wise teaching, and thus increase your precious fund of learning; and 2) put your efforts at teaching upon such as are just. — A general thought is involved in these ad-

monitions, namely that of the fellowship and association of the wise man. His friends will be wise men and just men, not indeed perfect as yet, but like himself needing some rebuke, reproof, and teaching. One is to help the other in kindly and fraternal spirit to the betterment and advance of all. As for this fellowship it is separate and distinct from the world, i. e. those who like the rich hog owner in the parable of the Prodigal Son have permanently settled down to a godless and wicked life in the "far country" away from the house of Wisdom.

V. 10 is one of the great fundamentals of Wisdom's teaching, cf. 1, 7. It is repeated here, however, as clarifying what precedes. Why is it useless to offer the true wisdom to scoffers and scorners, to men living in flagrant wickedness? Because the very beginning, the a-b-c of this wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and this very first part they trample under foot. Why is a wise man profited by rebuke and by teaching? Why, he has the real beginning of true wisdom, namely the fear of the Lord, and is thus receptive for further wisdom. So we have what may be called and used as a *mashal* by itself: **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, etc.**, only the subject is "the beginning," and the predicate "the fear." *Yir'ath* coupled with *Yahveh* as the beginning of saving wisdom is not dread and terror or slavish fear. Such terror is only for the scoffer and the wicked when God's judgments begin to take hold of him. Godly fear of the covenant Lord is humble and holy submission to him, obedient bowing to his Word and will, readiness to do what he says without answering back or proud questioning. The beginning of wisdom in any man's heart consists of this fear. Respect for the Lord our Savior is vital even in the New Testament. It goes together with faith and love, and the three constitute a whole. The idea in the term *beginning*, *th^echillath*, is that fear is the start, the first

step, and thus the presupposition for all other wisdom. In 1, 7 there is a different word for "beginning," namely *re'shith*, which means that which is at the top, under which all other wisdom is ranged, thus the governing principle of all wisdom. Both, of course, are true.—The second line of this *mashal* is synonymous: **and the knowledge of the holy is understanding**, *binah*, here in the same sense as at the end of v. 6, namely insight, the inner apprehension or realization of truth or reality. What, however, is meant by *q'doshim*, the plural from the adjective *qadosh*? The ancients read this plural as "saints"; it is so translated in Hos. 11, 12. So they interpret our line: "the knowledge which makes saints and is proper to saints." Delitzsch excuses them because they did not yet know that this plural form is not a numerical plural, but like *'Elohim*, a plural expressing a unit with an inward multiplication. That settles A. Pfeiffer's superficial interpretation, when he calls *q'doshim* the well known objects and prescriptions of the law concerning the worship of Jehovah. That reads as if he had looked only at the translation, namely Luther's: *was heilig ist*. It would be strange to make the beginning and start of wisdom as great a thing as the fear of the Lord, and then make understanding or the fuller measure of wisdom something less, namely acquaintance with details about the forms of service. If the start has to do with the Lord himself, any advance cannot deal with less. Delitzsch is right, this plural *q'doshim* denotes God who is Holy, Holy, Holy (Is. 6, 3), i. e. the absolute Holy One. To know and reverence *Yahveh* is the start, and to know him as the Allholy One, separate from all that is sinful and wrong, and the very embodiment and source of all holiness, is the advance. But we must not forget that both this fear and this understanding (insight) draw the wise man unto the Lord and unite him with the Allholy One. These two, reverence for and inner

comprehension of the true character of the Lord as full of grace (Yahveh) and holiness (*q^edoshim*), mark the inner and outer attitude of every man who is truly godly and thus truly wise. In other words, start and finish of all spiritual wisdom is and will ever remain childlike fear and sanctified insight, both directed toward the Lord of grace and holiness.

SUGGESTIONS

Let Ziethe show us how to get the Gospel contents out of our text: Wisdom hath builded her house, etc. Here the kindness and mercy of God is pictured before our eyes. He has built a house, a heavenly palace, prepared and decorated to receive and hold very many guests. He has prepared his Church on earth, built it upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, in order to make poor sinners citizens of his kingdom and heirs of his eternal glory and blessedness. It is a glorious structure, decorated with proud pillars. It is a sacred structure, as the seven pillars are to indicate, since in the Holy Scriptures seven is a sacred number, the number of the covenant between God and men. He has killed his beasts, brought on his wine, and set his table. These are the gifts and treasures of grace which he has intended for us and given for us in Christ Jesus, his dear Son: righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.— And now we are told concerning Wisdom: She hath sent forth her maidens, etc., v. 3-6. The maidens sent out by Wisdom in order to extend her message and invitation, are all the messengers of God who have preached his Word and Gospel from century to century in all the lands of the earth. Once there were the prophets, then the apostles and evangelists. Now there are the preachers and missionaries, who again and again call and invite to the great and glorious supper of our God. Perhaps we will ask why here our text speaks of maidens, while our Lord in his parable speaks of servants. That is, for one thing, because the divine Wisdom is here pictured in the image of a woman. These maiden messengers and servants correspond to that image. But this is furthermore because only such messengers are fit for this office who walk in maidenly purity and chastity, gentleness and humbleness, and thus carry forth their message. And the message itself is for the simple

and those that lack understanding. This means all sinners, since by nature we all lack true wisdom and right understanding, as we confess in the hymn:

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

These are the poor, the halt, the lame, the blind, whom the Lord shows us in our Gospel of to-day. These are the babes over whom once he rejoiced and concerning whom he said: I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. *Matth. 11, 25.*— This call and invitation of God has resounded on earth for hundreds and thousands of years. It was not voiced in secret or in a corner. Heavenly Wisdom sent her servants upon the highest places of the city that their preaching might be loud and public from the rooftops, *Matth. 10, 27; Luke 12, 3.* Thus the prophet Isaiah once called in the name of his God: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." *Isa. 55, 1.* So John the Baptist preached in the desert: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. So our Lord and Savior himself called and invited: Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. So it is voiced in the sermons and letters of the apostles: Come, be ye reconciled with God. So at last it rings out in the Revelation of St. John: Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. *Rev. 22, 17.* These messengers have come also unto us, etc., etc. —

Though the text is exceedingly fine, there are very few outlines available, and these few, save one or two, ruined by a false exegesis and bad homiletics on top of that. G. Mayer has the very broad theme: "The True Wisdom"; but he uses categories: 1) In which high school is it taught; 2) how it is available for all; 3) what its significance is for life; 4) wherein it consists. Now this is one of the best. Yet part four equals the theme, and besides has no business at the end. Part three is undoubtedly meant to convey an exegesis that is legalistic and wrong. The whole outline is an immature effort that indicates no thought. — Deichert is a bit better: The Banquet of Eternal

Wisdom: 1) The house she prepared for it; 2) The Banquet itself and the invitation to it; 3) To whom the invitation is extended, and who are excluded. This might do, if the formulation of the parts were improved. A. Pfeiffer's six efforts show only how *not* to do the thing. Ziethe uses the entire chapter, so that he does not help us on the outline of our text which includes only ten verses. And that is the entire array, for Langsdorff quotes only Deichert and Ziethe. — We venture the following:

The godly man is one who has truly turned to the Lord his God (previous text). That means in the language of our text, he follows the sweet invitation of Divine Wisdom, and at her table is fed and nourished by the riches of heavenly truth.

The Table of Divine Wisdom.

- I. It is set in the Church.*
- II. It dispenses the heavenly food of wisdom and life.*
- III. It is surrounded by needy sinners.*
- IV. It is barred against unbelievers and transgressors.*

This is synthetic. Bring in v. 10 under part two, together with v. 5-6. Use v. 8b and v. 9 either in connection with part three or with part four. —

Wisdom's Invitation to the Simple.

- I. Her grand preparation.*
- II. The hunger she satisfies.*
- III. The blessedness of her guests.*

The last verse with its well known line offers a theme worth while:

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom.

Because it leads I. To life; II. To the way of understanding; III. To a safe separation; IV. To a blessed association.

The House That Wisdom Hath Built.

- I. Mark the seven pillars that uphold it.*
- II. Note the rich table that is prepared in it.*
- III. Hear the messengers that issue from it.*
- IV. Watch the guests that stream into it.*
- V. See the joy that radiates in it.*
- VI. And do not overlook those that are barred from it.*

Part five is intended to describe the life and blessedness of those who have entered and feasted at the table: a) They have true life and the joy of it; b) To them is opened the way of understanding, and the joy of that way; c) Wisdom is theirs, and the joy of having it; d) Likewise the fear and knowledge of the Lord, the Allholy, and the safety and joy of living in both.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Is. 12

One of the vital features in the Godly Life is *the joy of salvation* pervading it. A text on this attractive subject comes in well for this Sunday following the banquet scene of the Sunday before. This joy should be expressed in the exalted language of poetry, in the form of a psalm. That our text does; it is the psalm of Isaiah, with which he ends the second group of his prophecies comprised in chapters seven to twelve. The theme of this second group is Immanuel's Comfort in the Assyrian Assaults. How great and far reaching this comfort is we see when in chapter seven the birth of the Wonderful Son of the Virgin is foretold whom she would call Immanuel; when in chapter nine the great Light is promised to the nations sitting in the shadow of death (9, 1; cf. Matth. 4, 14-16), namely the Child that is born to us and the Son that is given us with the five wonderful names of salvation, who shall rule for ever (9, 5-6); and when in chapter eleven the Rod and Branch out of the stem of Jesse is described (11, 1 etc.), the Root of Jesse which shall stand for an Ensign of the people (11, 10), to which the Gentiles will seek. God will indeed use the Assyrians to castigate his people severely for their unbelief and sin, but in the end he will break this world empire to pieces, set up this Ensign, and gather the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah, namely the remnant of his people, (11, v. 12 and 11), and thus furnish the tremendous reason for the jubilant song of praise which God himself through the prophet puts into the mouth of that gathered remnant. Note that here, combined into one, is the near event

of deliverance from exile for the remnant of the Jewish nation, and the more distant event of the deliverance through Christ in the Christian Church, by which even the nations shall be blessed. This shows that the psalm of praise composed for the remnant of God's ancient people is also to have a place in our hearts and on our lips.

1. **And in that day thou shalt say,
O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou
wast angry with me,
thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.**
2. **Behold, God *is* my salvation,
I will trust, and not be afraid:
for the LORD JEHOVAH *is* my strength
and *my* song;
he also *is* become my salvation.**
3. **Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out
of the wells of salvation.**

The first line merely introduces the first half of the psalm: **And in that day thou shalt say.** What day is meant we see in 11, 10, the day when "a root of Jesse" shall stand for an ensign unto the people. In 11, 11 this day is further described. It is the day of Christ and the Christian Church. As Israel was once delivered out of Egypt under the first mediator, so for the second and last time shall it be delivered under the second Mediator. And just as Israel sang a jubilant song after that deliverance through Moses, so here in anticipation of the deliverance through Christ Isaiah under divine Inspiration prepares the new song of triumph. However this final deliverance through Christ is viewed by Isaiah in combination with the deliverance of Israel from exile. The latter is an image of the former, and so in foreshortened perspective, with the time interval omitted, the two

may indeed be viewed together. It is the usual mode in prophecy, even as Jesus also pictures together in one view the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, Matth. 24. — Now follows the first half of the psalm of praise, comprising six poetical lines. Between this first half of the psalm and the second half from verse four to six, there is inserted in v. 3 a simple, glorious prophecy, standing by itself, and not in Hebrew verse. In this first half Israel uses the singular and addresses the Lord, while in the second half the plural is used and Israel admonishes her own people. — The address O LORD is much in place, for indeed all the causes of praise in this psalm center in the covenant which *Yahveh* with unchanging grace has faithfully kept. While giving this psalm to the Israel of his own day Isaiah is really putting it into the mouth of that future remnant to sing in the day of Christ's deliverance. Isaiah's contemporaries might sing it in anticipation, the future remnant in commemoration. — The verb *'od'ka*, the hiphil from *yadah*, means: "I will confess thee," or praise, or thank thee. The psalm starts with an acknowledgement of the Lord, and at once names what acts the Lord is acknowledged for. The *ki* ushers in three acts of his, in three paratactic or coordinate clauses. We may use the wording of our English version, but we must read all from the word "though . . ." on as the object of "I will praise thee." — **Though thou wast angry with me** refers to the punishments inflicted on Israel. Of these, when Isaiah wrote, the Assyrian infliction was in closest prospect, and later the Babylonian exile. Let us remember that anger and *Yahveh* properly belong together, because in the covenant *Yahveh* made, one proviso was, that if Israel proved unfaithful *Yahveh* would discipline and punish her, and in fact, if she proved faithless altogether, he would reject her completely. So in this anger the Lord was simply proving true to his own covenant

stipulations. Anger and wrath are, of course, anthropopathic terms when used of God, speaking of him in human fashion. His anger in reality is only his holiness reacting against sin, as in its very nature it ever must. — Not the bare fact of the Lord's anger and punishment is here praisefully acknowledged, but this first fact in connection with the second: **thine anger is turned away**. The severe disciplinary punishment had attained its object, which really was not to cast off and destroy, but to crush in repentance. For the Lord does not willingly chide, he would much rather bless; nor will he hold his anger for ever, watching to relent as soon as possible. — And so the next clause follows, completing this threefold object of acknowledgement: **and thou comfortedst me**, the piel of *nacham*, "to let one breathe again," and thus to console or comfort. The comfort is in the return of manifestations of grace and mercy, as when the Assyrians were made to depart from Israel, as when Cyrus was made to send the Judeans back from exile, and as when Christ bestowed the riches of his redemption. This is the only true comfort, the sunshine of grace, the assurance and gifts of divine love.

V. 2 dwells at length on this comfort, in four lines, making a beautiful stanza, with *yeshu'ah* in the first as well as second line, "salvation" like the two pillars with garlands of praise stretched between. **Behold, God is my salvation** is not in substance different from the other proposed translation of the three Hebrew words: "Behold the God of my salvation." This is the glorious thing making heart and mouth overflow. "God," "*El*," the Almighty, is the proper term here, for he used his almighty power in behalf of his people in saving them. This is very plain in regard to Assyria, whose hosts departed in a night from Jerusalem. Likewise in the case of Babylon, when God made Cyrus free the men of Judah, Is. 45, 5 etc. And it is most abundantly true of Christ,

for St. Paul calls it "the exceeding greatness of his power . . . which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places," Eph. 1, 19 etc. To call God "my salvation" is equal to calling him "my Savior," only the abstract term *yeshu'ah* brings out fully and effectively the blessing that lies in the name Savior, first his saving act, and secondly the condition of safety produced by that act. — The objective fact that God is Israel's salvation properly stands first; then, however, it is followed properly by the subjective assurance: **I will trust, and not be afraid.** In the Hebrew there is a kind of play in the words: *'ebtach v'lo' 'ephchad*, which the German is able to imitate: *ich ergebe mich und bebe nicht*. "I will trust" stresses the chief subjective response to God's salvation, namely faith, and in faith the chief element, namely *fiducia* or confidence. That is exactly what salvation is for — for us to trust. By trusting it is ours, and by trusting we enjoy and retain it as ours. The negative: "and not be afraid," perfects the idea. *Phachad* means to be discouraged, to tremble. Trembling discouragement or fear vanishes as confidence and trust fill the heart. There is, of course, plenty of real cause for trembling in our sins. Those who are indifferent to their sins and do not shake at thought of them live in a blind and false security. But salvation means the cancelation of our sins, covering them, sending them away as far as the east is from the west. He who knows this salvation as indeed a reality, and trusts it with his heart, need not tremble, for all cause for fear is gone. — Now while the subjective confession and expression is sweet, and in the nature of the case must come forth, it will always be the objective reality of grace and deliverance to which the godly heart reverts, for all believing and trusting hangs in the air if it have not this divine reality as its basis. So the psalm sings on: **for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength**

and my song. This line occurs in Ex. 15, 2, the song of Moses after the deliverance at the Red Sea; also in Ps. 118, 14. In both places, however, there is no doubling of the Lord's name as here: *Yah Yahveh*. The abbreviated form *Yah* is found almost exclusively in poetry. Delitzsch thinks this doubling by Isaiah meant as an effort to outdo Moses. But we know of no such rivalry. Terms are doubled for emphasis, and this is certainly the case here. For the ordinary name *Yahveh*, like our equivalent "LORD," just because of common use becomes so familiar to the ear that its real meaning no longer registers in the mind. To secure the full attention here required Isaiah doubled the title, and that certainly has made every reader and hearer take special note. The Hebrew is the reverse of our English, namely: "for my strength and song (is) *Yah Yahveh*." And that means, not merely *he* and *he alone* (emphasis), but *he* as he is the Eternal One, the Unchanging Covenant Lord, *he as such*, and *he alone as such*. In this sense Israel is to sing: **my strength** is the Lord. This Lord constitutes Israel's strength. And it is an actual fact: take him away, and Israel would be nothing. There is a silent implication here: when the Lord did withdraw from Israel they soon lay miserably prostrate, to be kicked by their enemies at will. So the Jews are nothing to-day, no nation, no government, no ruler, no capital, nothing good in any way in God's kingdom. That they exist still as a separate kind of people, a ferment and irritant among others, is due to the Lord's punishment, making them one of his miracle signs for all nations and all times. They are everlastingly making plans for regaining Palestine and for achieving dominance in the world; but, alas, their strength is no longer *Yah Yahveh*, their strength is gone. With all the power of their money and political influence their grand plans fall flat. All strength is sham, the bubble of an hour, save that true strength which is the

Eternal One himself. *Zimrah* is **song** only in the sense of playing an instrument with strings. So the psalm says for Israel: the subject of my harping is Yah Yahveh. Here the subjective, namely "song," is again twined together with the objective "strength." He who has the Lord in his heart has both the greatest reason for making music, and the greatest theme on which to make it. — But the strain swings back to its starting point: **he also is become my salvation, *y^eshu'ah***, the same term as in the first line. From the fact of salvation all the rest follows, and to the fact of salvation all the rest goes back. Start with *y^eshu'ah*, and you will get trust, fearlessness, strength, and song, to mention only these; and when the song sings it will again be of *y^eshu'ah*.

The first strain is ended. Its theme is *Salvation*. Now follows the second strain with its theme *Proclamation*. But there is a connecting link between the two, not verse, but prose. This link fastens into the previous half of the psalm with the word "salvation," and then joins the second half with the statement: "And in that day shall ye say." **Therefore** in v. 3 is only the common "and." And the words that follow read like the Lord's own answer to the song he himself through the prophet lays on Israel's lips. As Israel sings: "He also is become my salvation," the Lord replies: "Ye shall draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation" (this the Hebrew word order). **With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation** is sure promise given by the Lord. "The wells of salvation" are really the springs, and the figure is both beautiful and expressive. Right at the sources Israel is to obtain salvation, while not far from those sources some stream may no longer be pure. The springs of salvation are the saving acts of the Lord as they flow for us in his inspired Word. And here the coming New Testament Word is meant wherein the saving deeds of the Lord will be recorded

as actual, accomplished facts, and not merely as promises to be fulfilled in future ages. Delitzsch parallels these springs with the stream of water that poured out from the rock at Meribah in the desert to quench the people's thirst, Ex. 17, 7; cf. Num. 20, 1-13; 1 Cor. 10, 4. We may recall also that at the Feast of Tabernacles a priest drew water in a golden goblet from Siloam, carried it in procession to the altar in the Temple and poured it into one of the two silver basins on the west side of the altar and wine into the other, whilst Is. 12, 3 was repeated, in commemoration of the water drawn from the rock in the desert. There is the idea of the personal appropriation of salvation the drawing of water with joy. Thus to draw water is to believe and receive salvation; and to draw again and again is to continue and grow in faith. V. 3 thus acts first as a finale for v. 1-2; and then as an introduction to v. 4-6.

4. **And in that day ye shall say,
Praise the LORD, call upon his name,
declare his doings among the people,
make mention that his name is exalted.**
5. **Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things:
this is known in all the earth.**
6. **Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion:
for great is the Holy One of Israel in the
midst of thee.**

The preamble in v. 4 is the same as in v. 1; in **that day** is the same day, namely when the Lord's salvation is complete. In v. 1-2 the note is "salvation," and hence Israel's praise of the Lord. So that part of the hymn rises straight upward to the Lord himself, even as the address "O LORD" also shows. V. 4-6 is a call to others and thus is directed outward right and left. This difference appears also in the

use of the singular all through v. 1-2, while v. 4-5 have the plural, merging in v. 6 again into the singular. So also there are only six lines in the first half of the psalm, namely two threes, for the Lord; while in the second half there are seven lines; namely a three plus a four, symbolizing the Lord in his relation to men (note in v. 5 "all the earth"). — **Praise the LORD** is evidently the counterpart to the first line in the first half: "I will praise thee," with the same verb *hodu*, hiphil from *yadah*: "Confess the Lord," and thus praise him. Thus to confess and praise the Lord means, of course, to realize all that is said in v. 2, especially his being our "salvation," and in addition to possess and enjoy him in his salvation. True confession always arises from such realization and possession. Who is called on here to praise the Lord? Daechsel seems to think it is Israel calling on herself. But that would be useless, after Israel has already done this in v. 1-3. No; after Israel has herself confessed and praised the Lord she calls on all others to join her in doing so. — A second injunction rounds out the first poetical line: **call upon his name**. The combination *qara' b^esem* does not mean again to praise him, much less to revere him, but as Koenig rightly says "to call upon his name." Delitzsch would turn this to mean also "to call out his name," but this would accord better with *l^e* than with *b^e*. Luther has: "preach his name," but this is not exact. One of the very best ways of confessing and thus praising the Lord is to use his name in calling upon him, i. e. actually to go to him for his salvation and saving gifts. And let us not overlook **his name**, which means more than just to call upon "him." The Lord's "name" in the Scriptures means the Lord himself in the revelation he has made of himself. So all men are to accept that revelation and then to use it, and it alone, in going to the Lord for his saving blessings. — The second line advances to the thought of preaching: **declare**

his doings among the people. The hiphil of *yada'* means to make one know, perceive, understand. All who know them are to publish the Lord's "doings," literally '*alilothaiv*, "his great deeds," *Grosstaten*. Not theories, not ideas, philosophies, speculations, mere personal notions or convictions, but deeds, actual unchanging facts. It is astounding to note, when one carefully makes the examination, how all the holy writers under the divine Inspiration dealt with the actual deeds and solid facts of the Lord, omitting everything of mere human opinions and ideas. Isaiah was a fact-prophet, St. Paul a fact-apostle. So all of them, they dealt in unchanging and unalterable realities. And these are the things to be published "among the people," for by them alone, whoever the people may be, will they be truly profited. — The third line: **make mention that his name is exalted**, is a deduction from the doings of the Lord. These doings when viewed as they actually are show one and all the exalted character of the Lord. They reveal him as he is; hence again we have "his name." The hiphil of *zakar* means to remind some one, here translated: "make mention." The thought is: remind everybody that the true character of the Lord as revealed in his doings is exalted, *nisgab*, the niphil from *sagab*, to be high, and when used as here of God, so high as to be incomprehensible. Any proper appreciation of the reality of the Lord's saving deeds will always lead to this true conclusion, that they are wonderfully high, away beyond our poor human notions. The folly of all rationalism is that it drags down the Lord's deeds, and the revelation they make of him and his character, to the poor level of men and of their deeds and ways of doing. All biblical preaching constantly reminds people of the supreme exaltation of the Lord as revealed in his deeds.

Mere reminding by announcing or preaching will not be enough for those who know the Lord and his

doings; they will do more: **Sing unto the Lord, zamar**, make music; Delitzsch: "Harp unto the Lord." And the reason is stated: **for he hath done excellent things.** *Ge'uth* attributed to the Lord, here the abstract term for concrete acts, signifies that which is exalted or very high; the term is intensive. He who rightly sees what the Lord has wrought and accomplished will thus naturally be moved to make it the theme of music and singing. The grandest music in the world, like all the best art, deals with this supreme subject. — The second line in v. 5: **this is known in all the earth**, should read: "may this be known in all the earth." The Ketib has the pual participle *m^eyudda'ath*, which according to fixed usage means "a known person," so the Keri (margin) offers the hophal *muda'ath*. "In all the earth" shows the wide sweep this glorious knowledge is to have. So these wonderful lines really contain, by way of prophecy, what afterward, when Christ had finished his work, actually became the Lord's program, the proclamation of the Gospel with all its deeds of salvation among all nations to the ends of the earth, and the confessing, singing, praising of this Gospel revelation or Name of the Lord among all these nations over all the earth. The thing is astounding when one thinks of the clearness, exactness, fulness, and grandeur of this prophetic statement of Isaiah; and yet it is all very simple and easy, for the Lord himself put this prophecy upon Isaiah's lips, he who would in due time bring it to pass.

V. 6 with its last two lines returns to Israel: **Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion.** It is the Lord who addresses Israel, calling on her to realize in the great day to come what she possesses. Realizing it she is to cry out and shout. *Tsahal*, really to neigh, then the cry out jubilantly, is often combined with *ranan*, to jubilate. "Zion" is the Temple hill, and thus came to mean Jerusalem, the city, and with

still further modification the people who worshipped at Zion. The "inhabitant of Zion" is Israel as dwelling in the city of the Lord's sanctuary. This already reminds her of her high possession and prerogatives. — But the cause for her loud jubilation is now summarily and impressively mentioned: **for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.** All through the book of Isaiah this striking name of the Lord occurs: "the Holy One of Israel," 12 times in the first 39 chapters, 17 times in the last 26 chapters, thus sealing the fact of the authorship of both sections by the one prophet Isaiah. "The Holy One of Israel" is derived from the Trisagion in 6, 3. Note the possessive in the title. He who is holiness himself is joined to this his chosen people to draw them through his salvation into fullest union with himself to be likewise holy and separate from all sin and impurity. The title thus is soteriological. While it emphasizes the absolute purity and separateness of the Lord, it combines with it by means of the possessive "of Israel" the idea of sanctifying grace and salvation. — And all the revelation he has made of himself on up to the sending of the Messiah stamps him as "great," *gadol*. It is all like himself, vast, high as heaven, glorious, far beyond all the little ideas and conceptions of men. And just what the title "inhabitant of Zion" intends to convey comes out now in the phrase "in the midst of thee," Hebrew: "great in the midst of thee the Holy One of Israel." He made the sanctuary what it was by dwelling there amid his people. How blessed for Israel to recognize it all, and to rejoice in all this salvation, in that great day telling it all to the whole world to bring it to share in all these riches of salvation. — Far in advance of "that day" God had Isaiah tell Israel of it all, even giving his people this psalm of future praise, in order that they might believe now and preempt the coming joy.

SUGGESTIONS

The subject of our psalm is *Israel's salvation joy*. The two halves of the psalm are two good sermon parts, 1) the joy of personal possession; 2) the joy of transmission to others. There is left only the work of formulation according to the preacher's homiletical skill. On the latter we may observe the beauty and skill employed in our psalm itself. The Lord himself used poetry, and not ordinary prose. Every line, every clause and term is carefully selected, not indeed with mere literary skill, but with that spiritual insight and skill which raises literary form to its highest degree. Well, that is the reason for homiletical skill, and that also indicates its general method.— We may connect with the preceding text: The banquet scene in Wisdom's house is certainly filled with happiness, and not the swiftly passing happiness of an hour like earthly banquets, but a happiness that is spiritual and endures. We catch there a picture of the Christian's entire life. That is the thing our text dwells on and unfolds.

True Christians Are the Happiest People in the World.

I. *So happy that they must tell the Lord of their happiness.* Joyfully they confess:

- 1) The comfort of his pardon.
- 2) The peace of his salvation.
- 3) The trust and fearlessness of their hearts.
- 3) The strength of their new life.
- 5) And the joy of drinking in this salvation ever anew.

II. *So happy that they must tell others to join them in their happiness.* Joyfully they want them too:

- 1) To call upon the Lord's name (i. e., for pardon and help).
- 2) To publish his doings (i. e., saving acts) far and wide.
- 3) To glorify his name (i. e., the revelation he has made of himself in such an exalted way).
- 4) To sing his praise so that all the earth may know.

Conclusion: What happy people, those that dwell in Zion with the Holy One of Israel in their midst!

Worldly people often fool themselves into thinking that they are the only really happy people on earth because they go in for the joys which this sinful world offers. They pity the godly for being deprived of these joys, and look upon them as a gloomy, sad-looking lot since they follow the Lord. Yet the fact is exactly the reverse. Worldly people are to be pitied for the delusive joys they try to content themselves with, and godly people are to be admired and envied for the genuine and abiding joys which they possess.

The Grandest Joy in the World.

I. Next to possessing the Lord's salvation

there is no joy

II. Like helping to spread the Lord's salvation.

These are simple analytical outlines, following even in their elaboration the order of thought as given in the text. Of the outlines offered us by others there are a few of this type, and they are the best we have found. Bindemann has: *The Thankful Song of the Redeemed*: 1) Thine anger is turned away; 2) Thy people feel safe; 3) Joyfully they enjoy their salvation; 4) To all the world they make known his praise. — Koenigsdorfer outlines: *The Lord's Household is Well Off*: 1) They dwell in safety; 2) They draw from good wells; 3) They may speak from God's house; 4) They can sing in it to their heart's content. We may note that the idea of a "household" is hardly adequate for "Zion"; hence the theme might be improved. The last two parts are inferior in form — speaking from the house, and singing in the house. Let us doctor the thing a little: See *What the Lord's People Enjoy*. 1) They dwell in safety; 2) They draw from good wells; 3) They declare the Lord's doings among the people; 4) They sing his praise everywhere.

Since the Jews in Christ's day made special use of v. 3, this may induce us to use it as a theme:

Drawing Water with Joy out of the Wells of Salvation.

I. *For ourselves*. 1) The water of pardon and comfort; 2) The water of peace and trust; 3) The water of strength and joy.

II. *For others*. 1) The water of knowledge (the Lord's doings, and his excellent name); 2) The water of faith (believe and thus call upon him).

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Is. 65, 17-19 and 24-25

Perhaps this text is chosen for this Sunday to match in a way the old epistle text, Rom. 8, 18 etc. which speaks of the deliverance of the creature from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Its object is plain as regards the Godly Life; this kind of life is always *headed for heaven*. — The wonderful structure of the second half of Isaiah has been elucidated in the introductions to the texts for The Third Sunday in Advent and The Sunday after Christmas. We are in the last great triad, and in the last one of its sub-triads, which describes the new order of things in the final deliverance. We have had a text from this sub-triad, namely the very first section of it, Is. 63, 7-16, which ought to be recalled. This sub-triad is built up of three lesser triads. Our text is from the second of these lesser triads which embraces the entire 65th chapter. Our text is from the last portion of it. Here the prophet views prophetically the New Testament era as it merges into everlasting blessedness. It must be well understood, however, that Isaiah does not draw the sharp line which the second coming of Christ puts between the New Testament era as such and the following glories of heaven. This was withheld from him. He sees the two together in the following fashion: obdurate Israel is finally and irrevocably rejected and the Gentiles are admitted to join the remnant of true Israel, and in and for this grand body of believers the heavenly promises shall be fulfilled. Our text contains chiefly the latter, but adds a touch from the gracious times of the New Testament era,

namely v. 24. — After the final fervent prayer for Israel in 63, 7-64, 12 chapter 65 brings us the Lord's answer, the definite decision that he will not relent, that only a remnant will be saved and that he will accept the hosts of believing Gentiles, and for these his servants the final glories shall be realized.

17. For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth:

and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

18. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in* that which I create:

for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people:

and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

For connects these verses with what precedes in v. 13-16 concerning the Lord's true servants. The blessedness awaiting them is ushered in by the exclamation **behold**. It is certainly worth all the attention we can give it. — And now comes the solemn announcement: **I create new heavens and a new earth**. This is exactly what Peter foretells: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," 2 Pet. 3, 13. And John: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea," Rev. 21, 1. Here we have the verb *bore'*, from *bara'*, "to create" in the sense of calling into existence. Yet we dare not press the term here to imply that the former earth and heaven, those that we see now, shall be annihilated, and thus new heavens and a new earth created. This question is settled by the old epistle for

the day: the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God; was made subject to vanity *in hope*; *shall be delivered* from the bondage of corruption *into the glorious liberty of the sons of God*. 2 Pet. 3, 10, and similar passages, must be understood accordingly, namely the passing away of the heavens, the melting of the elements, the burning up of the earth and the works therein. In fact Isaiah himself says that the new product of this creative act of God shall be so new that the former shall not even be remembered or come into mind. The word "create" is undoubtedly justified for the astounding act of thus substituting the new for the old. While it is true enough that Isaiah joins things out of the blessed New Testament era with things out of the heavenly blessedness, this must be held fast: he does not commingle them. We cannot understand, therefore, how Aug. Pieper can remark that Isaiah in stating this creative act of God does not keep time and eternity apart. Only in a way he does not, namely by putting things of time beside things of eternity; but never in this way that we must be in doubt which belongs to time and which to eternity. — **New heavens and a new earth** are not to be considered two or a duality, though the adjective "new" is repeated. These are a unit. Now indeed earth and heaven are separate, divided by sin, but in the new creation this barrier will be gone. Nor does the term "heavens" here mean sky, or the sidereal expanse such as we see now, but the heavens of God, angels, and saints. How earth and heaven will thus be brought together is beyond our comprehension which is absolutely tied to the poor concepts of ordinary time and space and can imagine neither of them as non-existent. But at last there shall be no more time, Rev. 10, 6, and space as we now know it shall certainly also be gone. — **And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind**, means "the former things," i. e. as they were in the old heavens and old earth. For *hari'*-

shonoth is feminine, and can hardly refer back to the Hebrew terms "new heavens and a new earth," but like such feminines is used as a neuter. Moreover, it does not refer back to "the former troubles" in v. 16. Things as they used to be "shall not be remembered," *zakar*, in the niph'al passive. The idea is strengthened by adding: **nor come into mind**, lit.: "rise to the heart," *'alah 'al-leb*, to affect thought, desire, or will. The idea is that even such a thing as comparing the old heavens and earth with the new will not occur to these servants of the Lord in the new heavens and earth. How tremendous, then, will be the impressions they will make! Our present heavens and earth declare the glory of God and show his handiwork, but all that we see now will be blotted out by the unspeakable glories we then shall see.

In v. 18 the adversative **but**, *ki im*, puts the following thought over against the idea of such remembering. Putting that idea as wholly out of the question completely aside, **be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create**. Not only will gladness and rejoicing fill the hearts of these blessed servants, it is to fill them, the Lord wants it so. With *'asher* we may supply *'al* in thought, or simply read it in the broadest sense of the relative: "in regard to that which" etc. — And what this creation is the next line states: **for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy**. Note how closely this line resembles line one of v. 17, both having "for," "behold," and "create," only the objects differing. So the reason for this gladness is again astounding and worthy of all attention: "behold!" And again it is a creative act which captivates our minds, one which he alone can perform who can call that into being which is not. He creates "Jerusalem a rejoicing"; he makes her what she never was before, *gilah* in his own eyes and in the eyes of all who behold her a joy for ever. This is the Jerusalem of which Rev. 21, 2

tells us: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem" ("new" because created a rejoicing), "coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband." And that we may understand more fully there is added the great voice out of heaven saying: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Jerusalem, the actual city in Palestine, in times past — think of Isaiah's time, and Christ's time — was the reverse of "a rejoicing," i. e. an object of joy. But in the new heavens and new earth this will be changed. Not that the actual city in Palestine will be wondrously changed by a creative act of the Lord, as chiliasts have dreamed — Fausset, for instance, who writes: "The glorious literal Jerusalem of the millennium, the metropolis of the Christianized world kingdoms, will be the earthly representative and forerunner of the heavenly and everlasting Jerusalem which shall follow the destruction of the old earth and its atmosphere." The Lord in our passage makes simultaneous the creation of the new heaven and earth and that of Jerusalem as a rejoicing. And that we may clearly understand what is meant by **Jerusalem** he adds the further word: **and her people a joy**, which is synonymous. These "people" are the servants spoken of in the preceding verses, the Lord's people, his true believers; they constitute "Jerusalem." They shall be freed from all troubles, ills, sins, imperfections, in fact from all that now holds them down in this poor earthly existence, and shall thus be made *gilah*, "a rejoicing," and *masos*, a jubilation or "joy."

V. 19 corroborates this and makes it still plainer. Here we are told for whom they shall be a rejoicing; that "Jerusalem" and "my people" are identical; and that the new condition shall be indeed one minus every ill. **And I will rejoice in Jerusalem** means the Lord himself. The verb *gul* is the same root as the fore-

going noun *gilah*. The whole state of Jerusalem must be perfect and glorious indeed in the highest spiritual sense for Jehovah thus to rejoice over it. **And joy in my people** has the same verb, *sus*, corresponding to the foregoing noun *masos*. So v. 18 and v. 19 are counterparts and synonymous, and in both, "Jerusalem" and "her (my) people" identical. — And this shall be the reason for the Lord's joy: **the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying** — all that shall have been left behind and removed for ever. Crying and weeping are mentioned as evidences; back of them lie the real evils that produce these evidences. With the evils all their evidences will disappear. It is the negative way of describing the perfect state in heaven, used rather of necessity because the positive perfections and delights are to such a large extent beyond our poor earthly powers of comprehension. — V. 21-23 are omitted as, for one thing, not really pertinent to the idea governing the selection of the text for this Sunday, and probably also because of a difficulty in the interpretation acknowledged by all.

24. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

25. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

Terem with the future means "hardly" or "before." So here: hardly shall they call or start praying, the Lord will already answer, '*anah* in the sense of replying favorably to a petition. — This glorious

promise is sealed by repetition: **and while they are yet speaking**. i. e. before they have finished their petitions, **I will hear**, i. e. favorably. The *va* before the two *'ani* ("I") is the *vav* of the apodosis; and *hem* and *'ani* are strongly contrasted: *they* still speaking, *I* already granting the request. These promises refer to the New Testament era, as their parallels so plainly show, Luke 11, 5-13; John 14, 13 etc.; 15, 4; 16, 23 etc.

V. 25 is quite plain in what the words themselves say. These five poetical lines are a brief repetition of what was already promised in 11, 6-9. **The wolf and the lamb shall feed together**, without the former devouring the latter as is universally the case now. Nature shall so be changed. The verb *ra'ah* means "to pasture," and implies that the carnivorous world shall be so no more. *Taleh* is the young, the tender one, hence here for lamb; and *'echad* with *k^e* is almost an adverb and means "as one," i. e. together, as if their being together is quite the natural thing. — The picture is duplicated, and the point of change implied regarding the food of the wolf is directly stated in regard to the lion: **and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock**, no longer tearing and devouring other animals as his natural food. — The third statement to the same effect has been pounced upon by the critics as an interpolation, because it differs from what is said in 11, 8 about the asp, and because there is no other creature mentioned in this line, while there are pairs in the two preceding lines: **and dust the serpent's meat**. As to the second objection, what companion beast was there to put beside the serpent? Likewise, what law of language or logic demands a second beast? The first objection falls to pieces of itself, since the picture of the asp and the child playing at its hole is totally different from that of feeding which runs through all three lines and thus speaks as regards the serpent of its "meat." A. Pieper thinks that the line means to say, that the serpent, as the one-

time tool of Satan in seducing the first human being shall continue to bear its curse, but like the other animals the serpent will be harmless. But Pieper sees in the entire description only the spiritual peace of the Messianic kingdom: "Peace on earth, good will to men." Koelling is better: the statement merely says that the serpent will crawl on the earth and take its food thence, and be harmless to man. Let us hold fast the point in these three poetical lines, which is that the wolf, lion, and serpent shall have lost their dangerous character entirely, and shall not hurt each other or man in their way of getting food. That is the whole of it, and we have no reason to pry further. — That this is the point to be conveyed the following two lines make plain beyond question: **They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.** *Yashchithu*, from *shachath*, as well as *yare'u*, from *ra'a'* are both the hiphil imperfect. The evil character and nature of all destructive creatures on earth shall be completely gone. — **In all my holy mountain** certainly does not mean: only in this one sacred spot, while elsewhere on earth they remain as harmful as before. The phrase mentions the center of the new earth with the idea that what is true there pertains to the new earth generally. Or better yet: the phrase speaks in human language and uses the idea of space and place as we know them now, but in the new world there will be no space and locality as we know them now. "In all my holy mountain" (note "all") may thus properly stand for the whole earth, which as completely new-created is all of it the Lord's holy mountain, made so by his presence, Rev. 21, 3. As "Jerusalem" will not be one place or city on the new earth, but the entire new earth will be this "Jerusalem," so "all my holy mountain" likewise. — Like a seal affixed is the solemn conclusion: **saith the LORD**, he who changes not and is truth itself.

While the words of v. 25 are not difficult, their

interpretation has caused great clashing. Delitzsch in triumphant tones actually challenges the anti-chiliasts to tell him where they are going to place this era of newness and peace if not in the millennium. He boasts: "On this question the anti-chiliasts default the answer." And then he berates them, charging that they push the interpretation of prophecy back to the point where the actual contents of the predictions was reduced to a few *loci communes*; that they crawl behind the enigmatic character of the Apocalypse without realizing that what it contains is the contents of all prophecy (Delitzsch means: the millennium!); that on the basis of orthodoxistic* anti-chiliasm no exposition according to sound principles is possible, since it twists the prophets' words in their very mouths, and thus actually upsets the bases of all dogmas which all depend on the simple sense of the words. These words were evidently written in the heat of temper. Delitzsch omits only one thing, which however is rather important: he forgets in his heat to tell us just what "the simple sense" of Isaiah's prophetic words is. All he is concerned about is to have them acknowledged as descriptions of the millennium, not of the heavenly state after the judgment, nor of the state of grace in the New Testament era generally. And his method of forcing this acknowledgment is more than precarious: because *he* feels sure the Lord's words cannot apply to the New Testament age or to the heavenly state, therefore *we all* must admit that they apply to the millennium and actually prove that there will be a millennium. He thus first assumes the millennium in order to get something that in his estimation accords with the prophetic words, and then

* Note the vicious adjective. It is not in the dictionary; we had to invent it in the English to match the German adjective. Delitzsch means an orthodoxy which claims to be orthodox, but achieves only the appearance and no more.

he is so indignant at his opponents in this matter that he forgets to show how these prophetic words do fit so perfectly this assumed millennium of his. — But Delitzsch helps to work his own undoing when he reveals what all his assumption of a millennium really involves. For in this connection he ventures to ask us to believe that the Old Testament knows nothing about “a blessed hereafter”; that beyond lies only hades; that the Old Testament knows nothing about a heaven for blessed men; that only angels surround the throne; yea, that before the resurrection of Christ there were no saints in heaven, there was no heavenly Jerusalem, whose coming down to earth could be expected; yet he is sure the Old Testament knows about a millennial age. Well, whoever is able to swallow these heresies may be allowed to add as a desert one more, the millennium. How about Enoch — where did his soul go? How about Elijah and his bodily ascent to heaven? How about Moses and Elijah who appeared to Jesus on the mount of transfiguration? When Jesus speaks of Abraham’s bosom, of Paradise, of Lazarus’ soul ascending thither the Jews with their Old Testament knew perfectly what was meant. When Jesus speaks of many coming from the east and the west to feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, these same Jews with their Old Testament understood perfectly. When the Sadducees put to Jesus their tricky question about the woman who had seven brothers as husbands, they antagonized the doctrine of the Pharisees, namely that the blessed souls could be and were in heaven. So the conclusion is plain a millennium that needs these false teachings on the Old Testament to keep it afloat is doomed to sink. — What helps to make Delitzsch and other chiliasts so sure of their millennial doctrine is the bungling of some well-meaning anti-chiliasts. Thus Hahn and others make the wolf, lamb, and other beasts mean different kinds of men. This outrages Delitzsch, and rightly so, for

there is not the slightest hint in the text that these animals are to be thus allegorized. Further encouragement comes to the chiliasts by men like Thomasius, who give up the ship and declare the whole question is still "a theological problem" awaiting solution. Delitzsch probably means men of this type when he boasts of his opponents defaulting on the answer, as to just where v. 25 etc. is to find its fulfillment.

And now we are ready to accept the challenge of Delitzsch, hurled at the anti-chiliasts: "When shall this take place? . . . Now when?" And our answer shall be even as Delitzsch demands, "the simple sense of the words of revelation," not a construction of our own, and not the supposition of some chiliast that the only way out is a millennium. Isaiah answers this "when" in 65, 17: in the day when God will create the new heavens and the new earth. 2 Pet. 3, 13 states the same thing. That these passages signify the end of the world, 2 Pet. 3, 12 puts beyond the shadow of a doubt. Rev. 21, 1 etc. adds still more testimony. — Delitzsch sees this answer so plain, clear, and to the point. But instead of accepting "the simple sense of the words of revelation," he commits the very perverting with which he charges his opponents. This new Jerusalem, he tells us, the Old Testament prophecy never puts *beyond* the end of the world, but always *this side of* the end (i. e. in a millennium). Here the complete falseness of his chiliasm comes to view. He twists the prophet's words in the prophet's own mouth. Delitzsch makes Isaiah say, that the newly created heaven and earth and the new Jerusalem *precede* the end of the world, while Isaiah and the rest of the prophets all say that the new heaven etc. *mark and constitute* the end of the world. Is. 65, 18: "Be ye glad and rejoice *for ever* in that which I create." Why "for ever"? Because it is the final creation. When Isaiah writes, v. 19: "The voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying"

(in the new Jerusalem), all sane exegesis knows that this is identical with Rev. 21, 4: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." When, when shall this be? All Scripture answers: after the world ends, in the blessed eternity.

Now it is true, Isaiah and the prophets see the era of grace and the era of glory in one grand picture; they do not see how during centuries one thing follows another; first the era of grace with its Gospel proclamation, then the great tribulation and the final judgment, and then the blessed eternity for God's children. They combine it all, and sketch now one, now another portion of it. But they did see most distinctly the eternal rule of Christ in heaven after the final judgment of the wicked, and described it in different and wonderful ways. Micah did it by using the imagery of the era of peace under king Solomon, Isaiah does it by using the imagery of the Garden of Eden or Paradise, in chapter 65 adding some of features of the patriarchal age, v. 20, 23, in which men grew very old and saw generation after generation. Isaiah here did not rise fully to the clearness of Rev. 21, 4 and state that there should be no more death, but stops with the suggestion that heaven will be like the patriarchal age when life had such long duration.* Elsewhere, in 25, 8, he says directly: "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away

* The examples Isaiah uses in 65, 20, etc., Lange says, are intended as "a scale of estimating the new conditions." "If one should die at the age of a hundred years of a natural death (assuming the case, since according to what precedes this could not really happen) he would die as a mere lad. If it were possible that there would still be sinners, such a one dying as a penalty at the age of a hundred years, by this very fact would appear as a man accursed and for ever excluded from all

tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it." Thus Isaiah interprets himself — and not a sign of any millennium. As for the building and planting without enjoying the results thereof this is the result of sin, and shall be wholly changed in the blessed hereafter. Sin even causes children to be born in vain. In the new earth there shall be no sin. God's love and grace, which even now in this vale of tears hears our prayers, will then rule in perfection and grant us everything in a manner transcending all human thought. Nature herself shall be entirely changed and brought back to the peace and loveliness of Eden, Rom. 8, 19 etc. as explained before. The new earth will be the Paradise that Adam lost. And the point in Isaiah's description of the changed condition of the animals is just that which he brings out, namely their noxious nature shall be gone, for all the effects of sin will be forever abolished. — The actual blessedness of heaven no human pen or tongue can express. So the prophets used the highest imagery they had; and even Christ and the apostles spoke in figures and illustrations, even using some that the prophets used, because the actual realities are too high for human expression.

As for Delitzsch and his millennium, besides the preposterous things he asks us to believe in its support, note that he combines in that astounding era of a thousand years absolute impossibilities. For he insists that the whole creature world (v. 25) will be again flawless and perfect; yet into that perfect world he

mercy. One plainly sees here the reference to the Mosaic law. For long life and continuance of life in numerous progeny the Thorah promises the godly, while the shortening of life and rapid extinction of name it threatens to the godless, Ex. 20, 5-6 and 12; 23, 26." Lange, himself a chiliast, thus puts v. 20, etc., into eternity, and shows that here no millennium need be assumed.

would put a portion of mankind still wicked and punished with death (v. 26 b). Delitzsch may deal in such self-contradictory fancies, Isaiah never did, nor any other inspired writer. — The matter is treated at some length here, because chiliasm is wide-spread, and because the commentator named is much used and has great influence.

SUGGESTIONS

Having the proper directive for this text, namely, that it means to convey to us the fact that *the Godly Life is headed for heaven*, little difficulty ought to be experienced in outlining the material furnished. See the beautiful path we have come thus far: The Godly Life which we are describing in its vital features:

- 1) Centers in the Lord our God;
- 2) Is nourished at the table of divine Wisdom;
- 3) Glows with the joy of salvation; and now
- 4) Is headed for the blessedness of heaven. —

One could be satisfied to make this the theme:

The Godly Life is Headed for the Blessedness of Heaven.

- I. *Where all is new.*
- II. *Where all is joy.*
- III. *Where all is peace.*

It is foolish not to consider where one is going. Yet there are people who travel through life that way. Just so the scenery at the moment is interesting is all they ask. They merely drift on from day to day, from year to year, until the end is reached, and expect to get to the right destination. Perhaps when they are dead some choir will tune up and sing "Beautiful isle of somewhere." It will no doubt be "somewhere," but there is great reason to doubt the "beautiful." The fact is you would not send even a parcel post package without an address and expect it to arrive where it ought to go; and you generally make sure that the address is exactly right and plainly written. Are you going to send your body and soul through life without an address? Better see that it is addressed,

and that the address is both right and very plain. Packages unmarked or illegibly marked land at the dead letter office.— The godly man has learned in the House of Wisdom to mark his soul for the right destination. He entrusts himself to the Savior Jesus Christ as with his godly companions he sings:

"Heavenward Doth Our Journey Tend."

- I. *Where sin and its effects are all gone.*
- II. *Where the Lord's work of grace will all be complete.*

Any one of the three cardinal points in the text, newness, joy, peace, may be elevated into a theme. The Lord's wondrous word:

"Behold, I Create New Heavens and a New Earth."

- I. *New in heavenly joy.*
- II. *New in everlasting peace.*

"The Voice of Weeping Shall be No More Heard."

- I. *When the Lord makes all things new.*
- II. *And the whole world shall have peace.*

The same may be done with the idea and pictures of peace.— The last verse of the text is so striking that one is attracted by it when considering the formulation of a sermon.

When the Wolf and the Lamb Shall Feed Together.

- I. *We shall see new heavens and a new earth.*
- II. *We shall share true harmony and peace.*
- III. *We shall cease weeping and shall rejoice for ever.*

Perhaps the preacher may conclude that he ought to put a word into his sermon concerning the false dreams about the millennium.— Introduction: There are people who have invented in their minds a kind of anteroom to hell, where the souls of the unsaved are supposed to go for a second chance to repent, a state of probation in the other world. Such a dream may comfort for awhile the indifferent and careless in this life. But this kind of comfort is like morphine, it deadens for a while, instead of breaking up all carelessness while there is yet time in this life. They who trust such narcotic doctrines are lost the more surely. In similar fashion people have invented in their minds a kind of an anteperiod to the eternity of blessedness, a thousand years of heaven on earth before the

end of the world and the final day of judgment. Their fancy has pictured Christ as a glorious King here on earth through all those thousand years, the Christians ruling on earth through this millennium, and all sorts of wonderful delights through those many years. This, too, is a sweet narcotic, drawing men's hearts away from the true Christian hope, feeding his soul with earth-born fancies, and again deluding the careless with the expectation of a second chance to repent after death under circumstances far more favorable than now in this vale of tears. They bolster up their dangerous dreams by mis-using passages like our present text about the wolf and the lamb, the lion and the bullock. — Let us stop with the lion this time, and see what the Lord really means by this picture of

The Lion that Shall Eat Straw

He means:

- I. *No millennium, but a new creation for ever.*
- II. *No millennium, but sin and sorrow eradicated for ever.*
- III. *No millennium, but peace and joy returned for ever.*

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Lam. 3, 22-32

After the fall and destruction of Jerusalem and before his enforced residence in Egypt Jeremiah composed five elegies on the catastrophe that had occurred and that had also plunged his own heart into unspeakable distress. "Every letter is written with a tear, every word is the sound of a broken heart." Lowth. Our text is the heart of these elegies, in position as well as in thought, for it is taken from the middle of the third or central elegy. There is evident purpose in placing a text on the sorrows of the godly right next to the text which shows them headed for heaven. The striking contrast is intentional. In the Godly Life, because of the sinfulness around us and because of our own sins, sorrows, afflictions, and discipline cannot be avoided. *The godly man, though he suffers, trusts in the Lord and finds comfort.* Our text is somewhat like Job in that it presents an extreme case, a whole nation plunged into what is almost despair; wretchedness, shame, and woe to the limit of human endurance. Now few of us have to undergo such an extreme of distress — which, of course, is a great mercy. But it ought to be plain that when the extreme is covered as in our text, all lesser afflictions are thereby taken care of. — The clouds of heartrending pain in the first two elegies thicken to impenetrable darkness in the third. All the sorrows voiced thus far now intensify themselves and become actual spiritual trials, since the promises of God all appear as having departed and whatever is left looks like the overpowering enmity of God. It is now, however, not Israel collectively that appears in this third elegy, but

an individual. This individualization is intended to reach every stricken Israelite, but of course will find its true response only in the hearts of the godly and repentant among the nation. In a way we seem to hear Jeremiah himself as in his person their representative and spokesman, and all that is best in him comes out in this elegy. So with the woes shown in their darkest form, in this elegy the turn is made by the godly singer, v. 19 and the following. Once again he prays, and now begins to seek for grounds of consolation, and finds them. These grounds are that Israel is not wholly consumed, and that the mercies of the Lord still continue; that even in the greatest distress the Lord has his good purposes, and therefore it is good to wait patiently, to endure, and to let him show his salvation; that the affliction may be long, and the ugliness of hostile men great, yet the Lord casts not off for ever, but will turn again in compassion; that finally, going beyond our text, it is really not the suffering that we should lament over, but the sin which causes the suffering the Lord is compelled to send. As thus the height is reached in the middle of this third and central elegy, so the following two elegies recede gradually from this height.

The whole composition reveals great art and this certainly in the presentation of the thought, as just stated. Right here let the preacher draw a deduction for his sermons: it is not the biblical way to throw thoughts together loosely or just to string them along as they happen to come; the biblical way is that of genuine order, using the brains and the training the Lord gives us to the fullest extent. Sound homiletics is justified by Scripture. The grandest material for the human mind to work on, namely God's Word, deserves the grandest form the mind is able to give it. These elegies, moreover, are Hebrew poetry, composed in the best of Semitic art. Study the structure of each of the five elegies. Each Hebrew stanza of the third

elegy has three poetical lines, like the two preceding elegies. But while in the first two elegies only the first word of each stanza begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order, in the third elegy all three lines in each stanza have their first words marked by the same letter. So the height of poetical art is in the central elegy. — While the preacher should know all about Lamentations, its thought, structure, art features, etc., our text fortunately is couched in such simple danguage that the preacher needs very little in the way of explanation to make it fully clear to his hearers. In fact, the text is a unit by itself, and its thoughts apply universally to all godly men whoever and wherever they may be. Only one point must be noted: Israel suffered for her sins. Let us keep to our sins as the cause of the Lord's disciplinary dealings with us in this life. This takes in the ungodly also, as it surely did in Israel. The godly must also bear the cross. This is when they do good and suffer for it, confess the Lord, his Word and doctrine, refuse to deny him by word or act. Of this kind of suffering, from which the ungodly are exempt, our text does not speak. It deals with the godly only in so far as they still have the flesh to contend with and sin daily and thus need repentance. When we suffer by doing well, there is nothing of which to repent. So Christ suffered. It is glory to suffer in this way, but a different thing entirely, when we are buffeted for our faults, 1 Pet. 2, 19-25.

- 22.** *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*
- 23.** *They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.*
- 24.** *The LORD is thy portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.*

Each of these three Hebrew lines begins with the letter *cheth*. The thought is a unit, formally marked thus, and centers in the Lord, namely his mercies, compassions, and faithfulness, making him our portion and hope in our sin and its consequent discipline. While the turn in the poet's thought begins with v. 19, the bright rays of hope and help begin to break through in v. 22 and the following. The calamities that descended on Judah were terrible; yet one thing stands out amid them all: the nation was not wiped out completely. The prophet implies that such utter destruction would really have been the full desert for his people if the Lord had followed justice alone in reckoning with them. **The LORD'S mercies**, *chasde Yahveh*, placed without a verb as a nominative absolute at the head of the line, stresses these mercies, plural as denoting the various manifestations of mercy. Really *chesed* is *grace, favor Dei* and its display in act, extending unmerited good to the undeserving sinner. And here the effect of these mercies is: **that we are not consumed**, *thamnu* (for the longer form *thammonu*) from *thamam*, "to be completed," here "to cease to be"; Luther: *dass wir nicht gar aus sind*. In other words Jeremiah sees in the fact that his people are not totally wiped out clear evidence of a number of divine mercies in the midst of all the penalties that have befallen them. The Lord must then intend still to keep his people, still to go on with his covenant relation as Yahveh toward them. This certainly is great comfort. So with us all when for our sins the Lord lays his hand upon us and yet lets us live. — **Because his compassions fail not** adds a significant synonym to "mercies," *rachamim*, plural for the inwards parts as the seat of sympathy and pity. *Kalah* is the counterpart of *thamam*, and means "to be completed" in the sense of disappearing, being spent or exhausted. A. Pfeiffer reads both *thamnu* and *kalu* as third person plural, thus making the two *ki* clauses

parallel: "The Lord's mercies, because they are not consumed, because his compassions fail not"; and supplies: "In the Lord's mercies I hope, because" etc., — interesting, but requiring too much to be supplied. The fact that any sinner has not yet been swept away entirely thus means that the fund of the Lord's compassion is not yet wholly exhausted; part of the divine capital is still left.

This thought is restated in v. 23: They are **new every morning**, lit. "for the mornings," i. e. one after another. "New" is in the sense of more of them. The idea is that the sinner who is allowed to live on from one day to another, though punished severely, should see in the return of one morning after another the continuation of new divine compassions towards him; for if once these compassions ceased, he would not see another morning. *Ubi sol et dies oritur, simul et radii hujus inexhaustae bonitatis erumpunt.* — Feeling the wonderfully comforting truth of these statements the prophet turns directly to the Lord and addresses him: **great thy faithfulness.** We may call this prayer. It is really confession, acknowledgment, praise. Here person inclines to person, for these words are worship. By *amunah* (note our "Amen") is meant the Lord's firmness; he is true and does not change. He holds to the course he once decides on in harmony with his own perfect being without vacillating. The faithfulness lies behind the continuation of his mercies and compassions, and thus explains why they continue to manifest themselves even upon sinners. If it were not "great" it would finally give out, but now it holds.

As the prophet's soul addressed the Lord in praise in v. 23 b, so now it addresses itself in corresponding assurance: **The LORD is my portion, saith my soul.** This draws the deduction from the two preceding verses. Compare Ps. 73, 26: God is "my portion for ever"; other passages likewise. The expression goes

back to Num. 18, 29: "I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel." *Cheleq* is an allotted share. So the prophet as one of his suffering people is not only not destitute, though his country is gone, the Temple and Jerusalem, his own home, and all that formerly made up his life, but has the greatest kind of share and portion left, Yahveh himself; and to have him is really, after all, to have everything. — The first half of the line states a fact, and assures the soul by stating it. But at once Jeremiah adds a practical deduction from that fact. If that is so that the Lord is his portion, then the one thing for him to do and do with all his might is to depend on the Lord: **therefore will I hope in him.** 'Al-ken introduces a deduction: "therefore," for this very sufficient reason. The hipil 'ochil, from *yachal*, means "to hope" in the sense of the German *harren*, await with expectation. When the Lord is our portion, and this solid fact stands, then, however dark and dreadful things may seem at the time, all kinds of blessed things are bound to come in due time. And the one thing for us to do is to wait with assurance.

25. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

26. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

27. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

The three lines of this stanza begin each with *teth*. This stanza also is a unit, marked as such by the three *tob* that introduce the three lines: "Good . . . good . . . good." The sum of the first stanza (22-24) is *the Lord* with his mercies etc.; the sum of the second stanza (25-27) is *the good* flowing from the Lord for those who wait for him. — The

three *tob* seem too much alike to make a difference in their meaning, although the construction of what follows differs. So instead of: **The LORD is good**, we prefer to translate: "Good is the LORD" in the sense of that which is good or excellent. To put it in other words: for the man who waits and seeks the Lord that Lord is a great good. No wonder, when we consider that the man here indicated has lost everything else and everybody else because of his sins and stands utterly bereft with the Lord alone before him. When he realizes that his only portion is the Lord (a thing he should have realized all along, but foolishly did not until now) he certainly will pronounce that portion a great good. — Yes, the Lord with his covenant grace is such a good **unto them that wait for him**, *qovav*, participle from *qavah*, "him, that waits," this new term explaining the preceding verb *yachal*, "to hope," by stressing the idea of expectant waiting. To make it still plainer, there is added the apposition: **to the soul that seeketh him**, i. e. that does not merely sit down idly in its expectation, but actively reaches out to the Lord by earnest, fervent, persistent prayer. And it is the soul, not merely the lips that must pray. How the Lord will prove himself such a great good is not yet stated; this is reserved for v. 31 etc. — V. 26 goes a step farther and tells us that it is the salvation of the Lord which makes him such a good for him that hopes: *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD*. The stress is on the last words. The Lord's "salvation" is his deliverance from the penalties our sins have brought, the act of deliverance plus the resulting safe condition. So that is what it means to hope in the Lord, to wait for him and seek him, namely to wait and hope for his salvation. And this explains how he is our portion; it is because of this salvation. There is considerable debate on *yachil*, and also on *dumam*. Some read nouns: "Good is both waiting and silence

for the Lord's salvation." Others read *yachil* as the jussiv of the hiphil from *yachal*, instead of *yachel*: "that one should wait, and that quietly, for" etc. Still another derivation of *yachil* is from *chul* or *chil*, to be frightened; but this would be more than peculiar. While the general sense is plain, Koenig is authority enough for *yachil*, from *yachal*, the participle "hoping"; and *dumam*, as almost an adverb "in silence," so that the sentence would read: "It is a good thing (to wait) both hoping and in silence for the Lord's salvation." Note that the subjective must always connect with the objective, the silent hoping with the Lord and the Lord's salvation. "In silence" means: without murmuring or complaint; it is not a silence that excludes praying. — The idea of hoping without complaint is amplified. One must learn to do this, be trained to it. It is harder if one has had no experience. Hence this explanatory addition: *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.* The yoke is that of discipline. Of course, the idea is not that a man should sin early and thus receive early discipline; but that the Lord should not reserve his disciplinary measures till late in life. All have the sins of their youth to confess, for all start born in sin. The early discipline from the Lord is a good thing, for youth is more tractable than age, and one taught early by discipline will also need less later on. — So the three *tob* have been unfolded. Glancing back we see that these three good things are the subjective correlatives of the objective mercies and compassions in the preceding stanza.

28. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne *it* upon him.
29. He putteth his mouth in the dust: if so be there may be hope.
30. He giveth *his* cheek to him that smitheth him; he is filled full with reproach.

The three lines of this stanza begin with *yod: yesheb, yiththen, yiththen*. We have had the Lord and his mercies in the first stanza; the good of waiting for his salvation in the second stanza; and now we have an exemplification of this waiting. The case described is one of extreme suffering. It had to be such a case, so as to cover all other cases. If we are thus to wait humbly, silently, patiently under the extreme suffering, it is plain what we should do in lesser suffering. Thank God, that he so often disciplines us lightly! But if he should make our yoke very heavy, let us bear it quietly and wait in patience. Our version translates as simple present indicatives; others make the verbs futures; Delitzsch reads them as Hebrew hortatives. Substantially there is little difference whether we say: he sitteth; or he shall sit; or may he sit (let him sit). **He sitteth alone**, namely he whom the Lord thus disciplines and who waits for his salvation. We may think of Job's case. The addition: **and keepeth silence** denotes patience; he does not murmur or complain. Again this is not prayerless silence. The reason for this silence is: **because he (God) hath borne it upon him**. *Natal*, "to lift up," when construed with 'al includes the result "laying upon." We may think of the yoke previously mentioned. The Lord raised and laid it upon the sufferer's neck. Because he knows God is back of it, therefore he closes his mouth. Men may be the tools with their hatred, persecution, and oppression, but they could not be if God did not so intend. Perhaps we need the hortative, namely the admonition to such humble silence. — **He putteth his mouth in the dust is figurative**, the oriental act of literally bowing the head to the dust on the ground in obeisance before some very superior person. Here that superior person is the Lord, and bowing low before him denotes complete and silent submission to his will. And yet the act denotes more — it acknowl-

edges the Lord, namely that it is his hand that sends the discipline, however severe. This is not forced obeisance, the bowing of a hostile head in the dust, but voluntary obeisance, willing and humble acknowledgement of the Lord; hence the thought that the Lord seeing it will relent, which is put in the words: **if so be there may be hope**, though literally the Hebrew reads only: "perhaps there exists (*yesh*) hope." The thing is put so humbly, and with the adverb "perhaps," in order to reflect properly the state of mind of the one bowing down. While the objective fact is that the Lord always lifts up the humble who fully acknowledge him and bow truly before him, the subjective feeling of the truly humble is always as couched in these words. And the word "perhaps," or "if so be" in our version, is not meant of doubt on the part of the humble, but of that complete submission which puts everything into the Lord's hands and leaves it there. It carries even this implication, that the Lord might see fit to let the humble one die in his suffering, and yet even so the head bows and accepts what seems good to him; as Job puts it: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," 13, 15. — The third lines adds the final touch. Of this most deeply humbled sufferer it is said: **He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him**, like Job 16, 10, and like the Lord's Servant, Christ, Is. 50, 6. Thus to receive blows upon the cheek helplessly and without even the show of resistance is to suffer deepest disgrace and shame. But this is only one form of such shame; **he is filled full with reproach**, *cherphah*, disgrace or shame, adds any and all other forms that men may devise. The fullest example we have in Christ, when in his passion all restraints were removed, and the Jews as well as Pilate's soldiers heaped upon him every last disgrace their base minds could think of. The verb *saba'*, translated "fill full," means "to be satiated" or fed full. Reproach and shame are

served up to him as his food, for him to eat all he can possibly hold. The picture here drawn is extreme in every point, and while not directly Messianic plainly recalls Christ's passion. However, he endured such shame vicariously; he was made sin for us. When we suffer we bear our own sin and guilt. The picture here drawn, in the last line, is the climax. For to sit alone and in silence is hard indeed; to bow to the very dust still harder; but hardest of all actually to give up and let men smite and disgrace us at will, i. e. to take it all as an infliction sent us of God. He who does the latter is looked upon by the world as unmanly, devoid of all honor; and this is certainly the worst reproach or shame and disgrace.

31. For the Lord will not cast off for ever:

32. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

33. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.

In the first stanza of our text, v. 22-24, we have what the Lord is (mercy, compassion, faithfulness, and thus my portion); in this fourth stanza, v. 31-33, we have what the Lord does. Nouns in the first, verbs in the fourth. All three lines start with *caph*. It is hard to see why the text was made to end with v. 32, when v. 33 so naturally adds the completing thought, and also leaves the stanza intact. In the preceding stanza in the middle line is the timid voicing of subjective hope. This is gloriously justified by our final stanza, in all its three lines, every one beginning with *ki*. What *the Lord does*, as stated in the three lines, is *the objective ground of all hope and comfort* for those who are put under the Lord's discipline. We are to hold fast amid the hardest discipline what these three lines state. They are at one and the same time

the contents and justification for our *faith* in the face of whatever may happen to us. — **For the Lord will not cast off for ever** states the first reason for the hope and trust of the sinner deeply bowed before the Lord. Note *'Adonay*, and also its emphatic position at the end. This title points to God's power and rule. In his hand are all things, to be guided and controlled as seems good to him. He rules even in the midst of his enemies and of our own enemies. The implication is that the Lord as he who rules all thing can, and actually does, cast of, *zanach*, reject for a time his own when they go too far in sin. To us this disciplinary period may seem very long; yet we are to trust firmly in the fact that it will end. But observe what underlies this statement in the entire context. Jeremiah is not speaking of those who become hard-hearted, obdurate, and fixed in their sin. These the Lord certainly will, and must, cast off forever. Read Is. 5, 1-7; recall the exposition of Is. 63, 7-16 for The Sunday after Christmas and read in connection with it Is. 65, 11-15. Jeremiah is speaking of those who bow before the Lord when he lays on the rod, of those in whom his discipline is fruitful. — The second line states the reason why the Lord does not thus cast off for ever, namely the multitude of his mercies. *Ki'im* means "on the contrary" after a negation: **But though he cause grief; yet will he have compassion etc.** That indeed must be held fast: it is he who causes grief. Grief comes not accidentally, nor is it simply the infliction of evil-minded and cruel-hearted men. *'Adonay* sends it. But it is his intention that such infliction may produce repentance, so that he can again "have compassion," and that "according to the multitude of his mercies." The hiphil of *yanah* is causative: "cause grief," *honah*, bring about depression, i. e. depress. *Racham*, "to love," in the piel, *richam*, means "to pity," to have compassion. There are no personal objects with these

verbs, and none are intended, because the actions as such are to be emphasized, and thus to be considered by us. A. Pfeiffer tries to supply "his people," *'ammo*, but this is to introduce nothing but his own notion. What the Lord thus does in turning to compassion is done **according to the multitude of his mercies**. That is the ultimate reason and motive for his action, expressed here, however, and in all the many other repetitions of this phrase in the Scriptures, as the norm of his action. What the Lord thus does corresponds with these mercies of his, is in harmony and keeping with them. The exceeding greatness of the Lord's mercy is unfolded and, as it were, placed before us in its many parts, so that considering part after part we may realize something of that greatness. So numerous are the ways of showing mercy on the Lord's part that his great attribute of mercy looks to us like a whole crowd, or *rob*, of mercies. The mercy is one — really the word *chesed* means "grace" —, but shining in so many directions and in such varied ways, it looks like many. Moreover, the idea in the Lord's acting compassionately in harmony with his many mercies, means that when the grief ends he will give the sufferers in place of that grief, not merely one, but many mercies. Isaiah 40, 2 has "double" as many; again 61, 7: "For your shame ye shall have double," namely honor and glory. The Lord always acts according to this norm of his nature and being. He would a thousand times rather bless than punish. Yea, we may say: he punishes because men force him to punish; but he gives grace and mercy because he himself delights so to give. — This is what the final line adds with another explanatory *ki*: **For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men**. Not willingly is for the Hebrew "from the heart," i. e. as the seat of the will, and the modifier goes with both verbs "afflict" and "grieve." Here the personal object is finally

added: "the sons of the man," human beings; not as suggested above by A. Pfeiffer only "his people." So there are three stages in the comfort: 1) grief is bound to end; 2) the mercies will exceed the previous grief; 3) the Lord never delights in the grief.

SUGGESTIONS

"Seems it in my anguish lone,
As though God forsook his own,
Yet I hold this knowledge fast,
God will surely help at last. . . .

I can rest in thoughts of him,
When all courage else grows dim,
For I know my soul shall prove
His is more than father's love. . . .

Man may hate me causelessly,
Man may plot to ruin me,
Foes my heart may pierce and rend:
God in heaven is still my Friend." —

The godly man is headed for heaven, but while in this life, because of his sins, is often under the rod. That is one of the vital features of the Godly Life which we cannot too carefully consider and too thoroughly understand. Our text affords us great aid.

Under the Rod.

- I. *The mercy of it* (1st stanza).
- II. *The good of it* (2nd stanza).
- III. *The pain of it* (3rd stanza).
- IV. *The end of it* (4th stanza).

This is simply analytical, using the four stanzas as four parts, putting them under a connecting theme, either the one stated, or: "The godly man under the rod," or "The godly man under the rod because of his sins." — A first step in synthesis is taken when the similarity in thought between the first and fourth stanza is recognized, and these two are combined in one part. Still further synthesis may combine the second and

third stanza, and thus arrive at a sermon with just two parts. It will matter little then whether stanzas one and four are made part one in the sermon, with stanzas two and three as part four, or vice versa.

The Godly Man's View of the Lord's Discipline.

I. He sees the discipline as it really is.

- 1) How it may become very severe (3rd st.).
- 2) How it is nevertheless good (2nd st.).

II. He sees the mercy really connected with its infliction.

- 1) Not consuming us, but new every morning, because intending our salvation (1st st.).
- 2) Grieving us not willingly, but preparing us to receive the multitude of mercies (4th st.).

Of course, one does not need to keep intact the Hebrew stanzas in outlining. We may take any pivotal thought expressed no matter in which stanza and make it the theme, just so by properly dividing it we may cover the main ideas in the text. A. Pfeiffer has an outline of this type, which may be found at least suggestive. He centers on the word "wait" in v. 25 and 26:

The Godly Man is One Who is Able to Wait.

He is able to wait because:

- I. He daily experiences God's mercies anew.*
- II. He realizes the blessing of patience for his heart.*
- III. He is certain by faith of God's help.*

The idea of waiting as found in the text is a good one, and there are various ways of utilizing it. Instead of dividing on the reasons for waiting, the waiting itself and what it involves may constitute the division.

The Lord is Good Unto Them that Wait for Him.

- I. His mercy is sure for those that wait in faith.*
- II. His support is sufficient for those that wait in patience.*
- III. His deliverance is certain for those that wait in hope.*

Genzken finds his theme in v. 24:

"The Lord is My Portion!"

- I. The ground for this confession.*
- II. The comfort in this assurance.*
- III. The self-examination this confession and assurance demand.*

Here again, instead of merely turning the theme in various directions, looking at it as a confession, an assurance, and a reason for self-examination, the division may well turn on what actually lies in the theme and is involved in it:

"The Lord is My Portion."

- I. He indeed lays a heavy yoke upon me.*
- II. Yet his compassions fail not.*
- III. And the multitude of his mercies will return.*
- IV. Therefore will I hope in him.*

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Psalm 1

The First Psalm gives us a *complete picture of the man who has the Godly Life* — certainly an attractive text for this place in the series. This Psalm, together with the second, constitutes the prolog of the entire Book of Psalms. Delitzsch, on the strength of one word, *letsim*, “the scornful,” pronounces this Psalm as not earlier than the time of Solomon, claiming that the term came into use at that time in connection with the Chokma, “Wisdom,” to designate the *Freigeister*, freethinkers, who scoffed at religion. That is rather close to the days of David. While the Psalm itself is anonymous and its authorship thus removed from positive proof, few of us will incline to attribute it to any other than the sweet singer of Israel. It is a gem in every way, in thought, in phrase, in the lines, in the arrangement — so short, and yet so perfect. While this Psalm belongs into the Old Testament and is in perfect keeping with those ancient times, its thought and expression are so true for all times, in particular also for the times of the New Testament, that we need no adjustments of any kind to make it apply to ourselves. When the moderns try to see in this Psalm a picture of the Jewish scribe and student of the Torah (the Torah being conceived of as an intricate system of ceremonialism), and therefore place the date of its composition into the Maccabean period, they stultify themselves. The portrait of the godly man, depicted in this Psalm, accords in all its features with the entire Old Testament and the lofty spirituality which it presents, and never with the fossilized religiousness of the Pharisaic students of the law in those late degenerate days.

1. **Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
nor standeth in the way of sinners,
nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.**
2. **But his delight is in the law of the LORD;
and in his law doth he meditate day and night.**

A simple negative and positive begins the description. Like the entire Psalm this is objective, stating the facts as such, with none of the poet's feelings woven ^{into} it. Yet the description is highly concrete, without abstract terms or ideas. It is a fine illustration of the manner in which we should often preach and teach; yea, of the manner in which theologians as well as godly men in general ought to think. Facts, genuine facts and realities count; religious fancies are but froth. Abstractions are good when they really rest on facts, but concrete thoughts are nearly always more effective. — 'Ashre is the plural construct formed from the piel of 'ashar, "to call happy," in later times used also as a singular: **Blessed!** literally: "Oh, the blessednesses of" somebody; or "Oh, on the blessed circumstances of" somebody. The word is really an exclamation. Yet it is meant as stating a fact, not as voicing a mere wish: "May he be blessed," i. e. he or they to whom the term is ascribed. The term itself denotes spiritual well-being, as if we would exclaim: "Oh, how in every way things are spiritually well with" the man here meant. We, of course, recall the Beatitudes of Jesus, Matth. 5; only the Lord spoke of classes of men, one blessed class after another, while the Psalmist here pictures only one man. A number of Psalms begin with "blessed," although we can hardly make a special group of them. — Three negative statements begin the unfolding of the blessed features of the man the Psalmist has in mind. In this sinful world it is a blessed thing to be

separated from certain contacts and associations. Note how the Ten Commandments are couched in negatives. Remember, too, that all such negatives have as counterparts the corresponding positives. To call a man blessed for keeping away from "the ungodly," for instance, means that he associates with the godly and has the spiritual benefit of their fellowship; so also as regards "the sinner" and "the scornful." There is a fine gradation in the three negatives here used, and in each negative a careful matching of terms: **the man that**

walketh not	in the counsel	of the ungodly,	nor
<i>standeth</i>	in the <i>way</i>	of <i>sinner</i> s,	nor
SITTETH	in the SEAT	of the SCORNFUL.	

The three statements are a climax. Sin and error get worse and worse: first there is simple *walking*; then follows deliberate *standing*; finally actual *sitting*. First there is the evil *counsel* or advice from others to which one yields; then there develops the *way*, an entire course of conduct self-chosen; finally there is the *seat* from which as a teacher evil is promulgated among others. First there are the *ungodly* who forget God in blindness and carelessness; then there are the *sinner*s who deliberately choose evil as a course; finally there are the *scornful* who mock and scoff and ridicule and spread poison all around. Note also the perfect correspondence in the terms of each line. In the first line: **the ungodly**, *r^esha'im*, who have lost their inner moral hold and are no longer guided by God, have their own **counsel**, *'atsah*, advice or plan, and according to that they **walk**, *halak*, in the sense of act, or do things. In the second line: **the sinner**s, *chata'im*, who have settled down to sin, have a **way**, *derek*, an established course in sin which is far from the mark set by God's law, and on that way they **stand**, fixed on it, not to leave it. In the third line: **the scornful**, *letsim*, the mocking freethinkers, have

their **seat**, *moshab*, their headquarters or fixed residence, perhaps a chair of teaching, from which they spread their evil doctrines, and there they **sit** or dwell, so that they are not dislodged. The picture is complete. — Now the blessed circumstances of the godly man are first of all that all the evil associations that have been indicated are not his: *lo', lo', lo'* — he flees the scorner's house, the sinner's way, the ungodly's counsel; he will not listen to that counsel, step upon that way, nor visit that house or school. Yes, he is a separatist — that is blessedness for him. He has learned to say no, and to stand by that no. They may call him a fool for not listening to that counsel, narrow-minded for avoiding that way, bigoted for turning from that seat. The Lord calls him blessed. — As one reads these lines, unmatched in terms and thought in any but inspired writing, he feels the influence of the Holy Spirit in their composition. That Spirit guided the heart, mind, and hand that penned these words.

Now the positive side of the godly man's blessedness: it is **the law of the LORD**, which is also mentioned a second time: **his law**. To all the manifestations of error and sin this great Unit is opposed. But here is where the commentators either go astray entirely, or prove badly inadequate. They read v. 1 only of morals, and then they see in v. 2 only morals again. They make the Psalmist say that the ungodly, the sinners, and the scornful transgress the Lord's commandments, while the godly man keeps them. By the *Thorath Yahveh* they understand either the Ten Commandments or the Jewish Levitical ceremonialism. Kessler writes.: "For the Psalmist there is no other way to get into living communion with God, save that offered and ordered by God alone, the law." And to soften the assertion he tries to tell us that the Israelite considered this law less as a set of demands than as a gift from God — which leaves the matter

just as wrong as ever. Baker writes: "The godly man will read the Word by day, that men, seeing his good works, may glorify the Father which is in heaven" — and "his good works" sounds very suspicious. *Thorath Yahveh* is the Instructions of the covenant Lord. Whether we think of the Pentateuch as extant in David's time, or of these Books of Moses together with other inspired writings as then existing, "the law of the Lord" signifies the inspired writings of the Lord, being first full of all Gospel promises, and secondly of moral directives. Jesus said concerning the Pentateuch: "He (Moses) wrote of me"; and for *this* reason he called on the Jews to search the Scriptures of the Old Testament, because "they are they which testify of me." John 5, 46 and 39. The First Psalm teaches no barren legalism, no arid work-righteousness, no blessedness without the Gospel. The godly man's delight is not in the gift of a legal code for his conduct, for it is a delusion to think that such a code offers a way for us sinners to get into communion with God, or that God has offered and ordered that code for such an impossible purpose. The Lord's Thorah or Instruction is meant for faith, and then for faith's fruit, which is love and loving obedience. The scribes and Pharisees most carefully studied their Old Testament, but only as a book prescribing law-works, ἔργα νόμου, and for this very reason missed all spiritual blessedness. Paul once had the righteousness of such law-works, but by the grace of Christ cast it away as dung. — The opposite of the negatives in v. 1 is introduced by *ki'im*: **but**, "on the contrary." And now follow two statements which express one comprehensive thought: first **his delight is** in the Thorah; and then in it **he doth meditate day and night**. Other men find their pleasure in other things and occupy their minds accordingly; this man finds his pleasure in the Lord's Word, and his thoughts are filled accordingly. *Cephets* construed with *b°* is

“pleasure” or delight. The Lord’s Word attracts the godly man, he is drawn to it and finds his pleasure in it. That is why it is so constantly in his thoughts. The verb *hagah* with *b^e* means “to ponder over,” as when a thing keeps humming and buzzing in the mind. The godly man connects all happenings with what the Lord says, judges all acts and omissions in the same way, and thus puts everything into the right light. His thoughts, volitions, judgments, ideas, and plans are all dominated by this higher influence of the Word. His desires turn to prayers in harmony with that Word. Even at night when lying down, while his mind still works, it is the Word which forms the background for his meditation. The Hebrew terms for “day and night” have the old accusative ending *am*: “by day and by night.” The verbs in these two verses are also significant: in v. 1 the perfect tenses state what the godly man so far has never done; and the imperfect *yehgeh* in v. 2 what he is constantly bent on doing. — But note, too, what is said in v. 2, and what is omitted as self-evident. One who loves the Word and keeps turning it over in his mind certainly must read and study that word and must often listen to its exposition and application. What is thus obvious is left for us to supply.

3. **And he shall be like a tree planted by the
rivers of water,
that bringeth forth his fruit in his season;
his leaf also shall not wither;
and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.**
4. **The ungodly *are* not so:
but *are* like the chaff which the wind
driveth away.**

Two figures, the one positive, the other negative, picture the blessedness of the godly man. The first figure, that of the tree etc., is explained in the literal

addition: "and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." The second figure, that of the chaff, is cut short without such a literal explanation, but only because none is needed and we ourselves naturally supply: "and whatsoever he doeth shall *not* prosper." These figures, the one with the explanation added, and the other with the explanation implied are biblical allegories, as has been explained in previous texts, see Prov. 9, 1-10 as an example. Let us note, too, that while v. 2 went only as far as meditation or thought, v. 3 and 4 carry to the godly man's acts, "whatsoever he doeth." — The two figures are evidently intended as the strongest kind of contrast, and that in more than one point, although the special point of difference, the climax, so to speak, of the contrast lies in the prosperity asserted in the one case, categorically denied in the other. This denial: "The ungodly are not so," really forms the literal explanation for the second figure. There is thus a chiasm: figure — explanation; then explanation — figure. We may think of the following contrasts: a tree, valuable — chaff, worthless; a tree carefully planted, because alive — chaff, thrown aside, dead stuff; planted by the rivers of waters, to aid growth etc. — nothing but the whims of the wind; fruit and thrifty leaf growth — even the place of the chaff not found when the wind is through with it. All that which is expressed in the figure of the tree — the place where it is put, its planting, its growth as indicated by the leaves — culminates in the "whatsoever he doeth" of the godly. Likewise, that which is indicated by the utter lack of all these things in the chaff finds its culmination in the "not so," i. e. no such things, of the ungodly. In sketching the two figures, the tree and the chaff, the Psalmist with evident enjoyment dwells on the former, for he uses three lines for it; while the latter presents no image he cared to dwell on, so he dismisses it with one bare line.

A tree planted is not one growing wild somewhere; the description, too, is of a fruit tree. So the godly man, made a good tree by the Lord's grace, is planted in the orchard of his Church. When some commentators make *shatul* convey the idea of being solidly established so as to resist storms, they twist the imagery out of shape — the wind belongs with the other figure, that of the chaff. Of course, there are storms in nature, and they may blow down or damage some strong trees; our business is to stay with that part of the picture used by the writer, which is a tree planted in a very select place, not a tree tossed about by storms. — Now the place where this tree was planted is **by the rivers of waters**. None of the commentators say so, but this must be a stately palm tree. It is foolish for a man like A. P. Stanley, in *Sinai and Palestine*, to conclude that it must have been an oleander, because of its rich foliage. Why, the oleander bears no fruit, only flowers, and is a large bush, not a tree at all! But palms were certainly planted near springs and rivulets, as in the oases. After reading how the godly man meditates day and night on the Thorah of the Word, it is certainly a fair conclusion that these "rivers of water" are the streams of grace that flow in the Word of God; the more since this figure of the tree is to picture to us the man described in the previous verse. — The idea of **fruit**, and this **in his season**, is common in the Scriptures as an image of good works. The godly life is a fruitful life, rich in good works, and these in the seasons set by the Lord; confession when this is needed, labors and gifts when these are called for, patience when it is in order, and so on. — **And his leaf shall not wither**, or fade, is often misunderstood of perennial greenness, as in trees that do not shed their foliage, but keep it all the year round. But all the Psalmist really says, is that this tree's leaves do not fade as when a tree is damaged or dies. So the idea of Delitzsch is wrong,

that the "leaves" picture the faith which transforms the life-water of the Word into the sap and strength of the tree. The entire notion is a fancy imported into the Psalmist's picture. Whether the leaves are shed at a certain season as in the case of deciduous trees, or retained indefinitely, is not indicated, and makes no difference. It is the not-withering that is stressed, and that pictures healthy spiritual life which goes with good spiritual fruit bearing.—So the blessedness of the godly man consists in this: **whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.** "Whatsoever he doeth" is not meant absolutely, but what he does as a man guided by the Lord's Word. That is what shall prosper, *yatsliach*, the *hiphil* of *tsalach*, he is fortunate with it, namely in a spiritual sense. It may not seem successful as men count success, sometimes quite the contrary; but the Lord accepts it as done from faith, in accord with his Word, and for his honor.

Now follows the terrible negative: **The ungodly are not so**, to say nothing of the sinner and the scornful. Against this dark background the picture of the godly man is painted in order to make his blessedness stand out the more vividly. So we must negate all that is said, especially in v. 3. There is no figure here, only the dreadful reality. The ungodly may seem to prosper, but it is only for a day, Ps. 73, 3-12 and 17-20. And this prosperity of his is only in fading earthly things; he has not one bit of spiritual fruit from all his life.—*Ki 'im*, on the contrary, **like the chaff** are they, without a particle of grain. *Mots* is the chaff winnowed from the grain on the oriental threshing-floor, **which the wind driveth away** at the time of threshing and afterwards. It is not the chaff as chaff alone that pictures the ungodly, but the chaff flying off before the wind. The separation of the wheat from the chaff is a picture of the judgment, Luke 3, 17; even as the harvesting of the fruit, whether of grain or other fruit, is another

such a figure. While in a way it is true that the chaff has no root downward, and no fruit upward, and represents total emptiness and instability, as Delitzsch puts it, this is not the real figure here, since it applies only to the chaff as such. Chaff flying off before the wind is the real picture, which images the casting out completely of the ungodly. The Lord finds absolutely nothing in them.

5. **Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.**
6. **For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous:
but the way of the ungodly shall perish.**

What already lies in the picture of the chaff flying before the wind is brought out in the literal deduction drawn by *'al-ken, therefore. The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment*, either when it comes now, or at the end of the world. The Lord's "judgment," *mishpat*, is his *Gerichtsakt*, when as the Judge he calls men before the bar of judgment. Not to stand, *qum*, it to lose the case, or to receive the verdict: Guilty! Even now when the Lord regards the ungodly he finds them guilty, before he makes that verdict known by the infliction of penalties. It is a terrible thing for any man to live on blindly, deceiving himself by his lying counsel, while the Lord is against him. — A synonymous line follows: **nor sinners etc.**, as in v. 1. Here "the ungodly" and "sinners" are identified, for while in v. 1 sinners were said to have a "way," v. 6 predicates "the way" equally of the ungodly. To stand in the judgment is the same thing as to stand **in the congregation of the righteous**. "The righteous," *tsaddiqim*, are they who have the Lord's judicial verdict in their favor. Koenig puts the

term on a wrong basis when he says that it denotes those who fulfill their circle of duties in any given period of history. While the Old Testament uses *hitsdiq*, the hiphil of *tsadaq*, forensically in a broad way, also of human verdicts of all kinds, here the context is plain, contrasting "the righteous" and "the ungodly," and speaking of the Lord's judgment alone. To stand in the congregation of the righteous means to be counted by the Lord as one of the righteous belonging by right in this company. "The congregation of the righteous" is the assembly of all those accounted righteous by the divine Judge. The divine verdict is in their favor, not for any works they have done, for the Old as well as the New Testament teaches the sinfulness of all men, the Old in particular showing us the sins of some of the greatest saints, such as Abraham, Moses, David, etc.; that verdict is in their favor, because their transgression is forgiven, their sin covered, their iniquity not imputed to them, Ps. 32, 1-2, but forgiven, Ps. 103, 3, even as Abraham's faith in the Lord's promise concerning the Messiah was reckoned unto him for righteousness, Rom. 4, 3 etc. It is not the *justitia acquisita* that makes them righteous before the Lord, but the *justitia imputata*. The congregation of the righteous is such now already by personal justification in the court of heaven, and will be displayed as such in the public judgment of the Lord at the last day. For this congregation shall eventually stand at the right hand of the divine Judge of all the world, and all the ungodly, sinners, etc. who spurned this divine righteousness will be gathered on the Judge's left hand. The congregation of the righteous is the communion of saints, the Church washed in the Redeemer's blood, clothed in his righteousness. To belong to this congregation is the height of the blessedness here attributed to the godly man. Note well, too, how the Psalmist, who begins with "the man," an individual, ends with the Church, the whole

congregation of believers. They who interpret the Thorah in this Psalm of the law only, and the righteousness of law-works, completely pervert the inspired words, substituting law in the place of Gospel, man's works in the place of the Lord's work.

Why the ungodly cannot stand in the judgment amid the righteous as one of them is made plain by the final two lines: **For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; etc.** Koenig translates *yode'a*, from *yada'*, with *gern haben und mit Interesse begleiten*, which in a way may do. The verb in this and similar connections means *noscere cum affectu et effectu*, as the dogmaticians put it. It is the knowledge which acknowledges, the knowledge of approval and love. The opposite, namely not to know thus, is illustrated in Matth. 7, 23, where the Lord tells those who prophesied in his name, cast out devils, and did many wonderful works, and finally come cying unto him: "Lord, Lord!" that he "never knew them." Of course, he knew of them, but he never knew them as his own. We might expect the Psalmist to write: "the Lord knoweth the righteous"; instead he writes: **the way of the righteous, derek**, the path they have traveled, on which they still walk, or whose goal they have already reached, "way everlasting," Ps. 139, 24. We may also call this way their life's course. It is the way of the Thorah, the way of faith, of true godliness, the way of salvation, the way of righteousness. The Lord designed that WAY; his grace leads and keeps men on it and brings them to its end, which is heaven. It is a poor guess for Koenig to make *derek* in our passage mean *Schicksal*, fate. Equally wrong are they who read it law-works. Good works, the fruit of faith, show that we are on that way, because they are evidences of faith; but the way itself is the Gospel road of faith and justification. The Lord's judgment now and ever approves that way. — There is one other "way": **but the way of the ungodly shall perish.**

The Psalmist does not need to say that the Lord knoweth not this way, for this is evidently implied. It is a *derek* or way indeed, in fact broad and attractive to the world and the flesh, and so many walk it. To them it seems good, and it certainly is easy to follow. Of course, the Lord never built or designed it, and instead of acknowledging and approving it, he has always repudiated and condemned it, warning all men to forsake it. The reason is plain, it **shall perish**, *tho'bed*, qal imp. from *'abad*, it loses itself. The noun *'ab^edan*, derived from the verb, means destruction. When the way itself on which men are perishes, they who are on it naturally perish also. Here again the Psalmist might have said: "but the ungodly perish"; as in the case of the other "way" he states a deeper fact, namely that the whole unbelieving and disobedient life's course of the godless ends in perdition. — The text thus ends in the statement of a terrible fact; Ps. 112 ends in the same way. It is as if the Lord hurled at us the terrible question: Are *you* on this way? The sermon should end in a Gospel word.

SUGGESTIONS

There is a duality in Psalm One which usually captivates the preacher; at least it has done so in a good many cases. Ziethe even has the poor little theme: "Two Kinds of People," and lets the two kinds idea run through the parts: "1) The joys they seek; 2) The fruit they bring; 3) The end they meet." Others use a little more skill: "The Difference Between the Righteous and the Ungodly: 1) The one uses God's Word with pleasure; the other treats it with scorn; 2) The one associates with scoffers; the other remains with the congregation; 3) The one prospers by God's help; the other perishes in God's judgment." To use a mere formal connective for the two parts in a duality, as in this case: "the difference between," then mentioning the two: "the righteous and the ungodly," is not *really* to have a unit theme; for a mere formal unity is only a sham — and there are too many homilectical shams already.

Koegel handles the duality with greater skill, and if one should desire to use the duality Koegel's idea is suggestive: "**Fruit-tree or Chaff, Which are You?**" Note the personal way of putting the thing; also the skill which lifts out the two figures so distinctively combined in our text, the tree bearing fruit, and the chaff. Now with question themes like this it is often easy, and also an excellent way, to continue the question on through the parts, allowing the elaboration of each part to furnish the double answer required. So Koegel continues: "In order to see the thing clearly, answer I. Who is your guide? II. How are you occupied? III. Where will you abide, now and at last?" We have imitated in our translation the rhyme he uses in the parts in a simple fashion, yet helping to make the parts easier to remember. — All outlines which use the duality in the Psalm split this duality vertically down through the Psalm. That is they find the two opposites (the godly — the ungodly) treated as to one characteristic point in the first stanza, v. 1-2; as to another characteristic in the second stanza, v. 3-4; and as to the final characteristic in the third, v. 5-6. So all these sermons have six sub-parts. The preacher's job is merely to find the best formulation for the theme and the usual three parts. Yet the parts may be reduced to two (the life, and then the fate of the godly and the ungodly), or may be expanded beyond three, at the option of the preacher. — Since we have mentioned Koegel we will quote from his very attractive sermon:

The counsel of the ungodly he puts down for us as the worldly-wise themselves actually formulate it: "Money is the main thing. Everybody is his own neighbor. As you treat me, so I treat you. The best gentleness is to take nothing from anybody. One sin does not count, especially when one is young. To howl with the wolves can't be avoided. Necessity knows no law, not even that of the Ten Commandments. Bread is sweet, even if a little dishonesty attaches to it. No need of getting gray hairs about being saved, for that comes of itself when one gets gray hairs. We can't help our weaknesses, and God can't go against his love. Where most people go, there I will be satisfied to go too. Thus superficial, thus lying, thus corrupt are the principles of the world. Blessed is he who does not walk in them and refuses to conform to the world." — On the way of sinners Koegel has this: "Ah, how many holy memories must be crushed like flowers, how many venerable principles broken like staves, how many warnings from without and from within, like angels, chased away, before a sin in thought comes forth terribly as a sin in deed, before the sin of

deed hardens into a sin of habit, before darkness covers the entire way!"—Let us add from Taube: "Everything growing merely out of nature, whether within us or outside of us, carries the germ of decay. The power of grace alone knows no decline, no ruin. We may have many withered leaves on the tree of our life, but they will always be only the leaves that grew from nature, when we acted not in the power and grace of God and his Word and Spirit."—

Kessler has the suggestive outline: "The Great Question of Conscience: Are You With or Without God? which our Psalm divides into three minor question: 1. How do you treat God's Word? II. Where do you seek your fellowship? III. What is your life's goal?" This, too, is built on the vertical duality plan.—He verges away from the dual plan of sermon when he outlines: "The Man after God's Heart: I. He avoids the company of the scornful; II. He is fed by the Lord's Word; III. He attains what is highest and best." The theme is excellent, when one thinks of David, the writer of this Psalm, as a man after God's heart, and how David really gives us in the Psalm a portrait of himself. The parts could be much improved, using thoughts like these: The man after God's heart is surely the product only of God's grace, molded to conform with God's will, cleansed from all evil, blessed and beautified with God's gifts, prepared and fitted for God's eternal communion.

Instead of being fettered by the duality in the text, the preacher may use all that is said concerning the ungodly as merely the negative foil or background for the grand portrait he draws of the godly man and his blessedness. It may take a little more skill and effort, but this will be more than repaid. In the series of texts on the Godly Life and its vital features our Psalm is really intended to give us what we may call the summing up of the main features of this Life, namely, in concrete fashion, hence a full portrait of the godly man. We are really not much concerned in the ungodly man, and do not care to give him a whole half of the sermon. For the sermon he is only subordinate, hence must not get too much space and prominence. We are really not comparing two portraits, much less are we painting two. We want for this Sunday the godly man's portrait only. That is to stick in the memory of our hearers, that is to shine in their hearts. So the ungodly man is mentioned only by the way, only as he can be used to help make the godly man's portrait more vivid and effective. In general we ought to get beyond this thing of looking at truth and falsehood, right and wrong, positive spirituality and

negative lack of it, as if these were co-ordinates. They are not; the Scriptures do not treat them so; only formally can they be paired. To have nothing or less than nothing (the negative) is never, and in the very nature of things cannot be the other half of having everything (the positive). When one penetrates a little into the real relation of positive and negative, he will have no more trouble with the ungodly man's usurping too much space and importance in a sermon.

The Blessedness of the Godly Man.

- I. *He is blessed through the Lord's Word.*
- II. *He is blessed with the Lord's prosperity.*
- III. *He is blessed by the Lord's acknowledgment in the Lord's judgment.*

One can also record three blessings, all of them vital and supreme:

- I. *He has the blessing of the Lord's Word.*
- II. *He has the blessing of spiritual prosperity.*
- III. *He has the blessing of divine acknowledgment now and in the end.*

King David's Portrait of the Godly Man,

And the Question:

Is this a Portrait of You?

- I. *His heart and mind filled with the Word of God.*
- II. *His life rich with the fruit of spiritual prosperity.*
- III. *His associates the company of the righteous.*
- IV. *His blessedness the divine approval from beginning to end.*

The ideal man, and your efforts in some manner to approach him in your life. Ideals that men form. Even when realized they finally blow away like chaff. The Lord's ideal. Wonderful because it is so high above man's conceptions, and yet can be realized in every one of us, no matter what mistakes we have made heretofore.

The Lord's Ideal Man.

- I. *Rich — in the treasures of the Word.*
- II. *Healthy — in the fulness of spiritual life.*
- III. *Prosperous — in the fruit of godly deeds.*

IV. Wise — in the company he keeps and avoids.

V. Supremely happy — in the Lord's favor and acknowledgment.

The second part uses the leaves that do not wither; see the exegesis. The fourth part uses v. 1 for the company avoided, and v. 5 for the company kept. Part five uses the term "blessed," combined with v. 6.

Life's Real Values.

- I. In the things we get.* — Sketch what the Thorah puts into our lives.
- II. In the things we do.* — Sketch what the Lord wants to use us for (to bring forth fruit for his praise and honor).
- III. In the things we attain.* — Sketch the joy and honor of a place among the righteous; and the eternal value of the Lord's approval.

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Is. 62, 6-12

This text completes the first sub-cycle in the after-Trinity series by describing *the home of the Godly Life*. The previous text already spoke of "the congregation of the righteous," yet Ps. 1 deals with the individual throughout. Now one of the features of the Godly Life is its vital connection with the people of God, called in the New Testament the Church or Communion of Saints. Our text adds this feature, but, of course, in an Old Testament way. It makes the home of the Godly Life "Jerusalem," yet not merely Jerusalem of old, or of the old covenant, but that Jerusalem as the Lord guided and developed it through the ages on to its final consummation. In whatever age then a man may live his life, if he be godly, his place and citizenship is among "The Holy People," "The Redeemed of the LORD," in the City whose name is "Sought Out."

Isaiah's third great triad deals with the spiritual and eternal deliverance, chapters 58-66. There are three sub-triads: 58-60; 61-63, 6; 63, 7 to the end. Our text is from the second, which presents the glorification of Zion in its highest perfection. This sub-triad is built up of three minor ones: the first is chapter 61; the second chapter 62; the third chapter 63, 1-6. Chapter 62 presents Jerusalem in her perfect beauty. Our text comprises the last two section of this chapter: *Jerusalem made glorious as the home of all the Lord's people*. All we of the Godly Life dwell in her.

6. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O
Jerusalem,
*which shall never hold their peace day nor
night:*
ye that make mention of the LORD, keep
not silence.
7. And give him no rest,
till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem
a praise in the earth.
8. The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and
by the arm of his strength,
Surely, I will no more give thy corn *to be
meat for thine enemies;*
and the sons of the stranger shall not drink
thy wine, for which thou hast labored.
9. But they that have gathered it shall eat it,
and praise the LORD;
and they that have brought it together shall
drink it in the courts of my holiness.

Thus Jerusalem shall be prepared for her great mission. In reading this lines something of the uplift in them should affect the reader. Isaiah's heart is bursting with joy as he sees in these words of Jehovah Jerusalem's wonderful restoration and preparation for a world-wide mission, by which she becomes the cynosure of all eyes. Jehovah himself speaks to his people and to us here, which makes every word more effective. So the poetic lines, too, glide from the commoner and shorter rhythm with three or four rises in each, to the impressive and majestic "great-lines" with five or more rises in each, Budde calls them *Qinah*-lines. These "great-lines" are cut by a *cæsura*, apparent in the reading, and the basic pattern seems to be three accented syllables before, and two after the *cæsura*, though the pattern is varied. We may note that each Hebrew word has one rise or accent,

whether the word is long or short, and all the unaccented syllables are not counted in the rhythm. This much of the beauty of the section comprising our text we all should know, that we may, to some extent, approach the divinely intended effect. — As in the first five verses of the chapter, so here the Lord himself is addressing his people: **O Jerusalem, etc.**, as so often in Psalm and prophecy, naming the Lord's people from the city of the sanctuary, their spiritual center at that time. The prophetic imagery is all according to this, so when Jerusalem's towers, palaces, walls and gates are mentioned. Whatever is foretold pertains to these actual physical features of the city as long as that city constituted the spiritual center of the Lord's people, although even then the things said were meant for the people as a people. But the day came when the physical city ceased to hold this position, John 4, 23, when the Lord's people were separated from a local and physical spiritual center. But they remained "Jerusalem" or Zion, and also Israel, though mostly Gentiles now. — **I have set watchmen upon thy walls**, the Lord announces. The observation is surely correct that Isaiah here writes of the restored city after the exile, with walls rebuilt and complete. That means, he sees the Lord's people as they will be then, and from then on into the great New Testament times. Those are wrong who imagine that the walls are still in ruins, and that their erection is the object of appointing the watchmen. As to who these **watchmen** are there should be no doubt, they are the prophets which the Lord appoints for his people. It is a bad blunder to think that it is Isaiah who appoints these watchmen. Now these watchmen have been set over the walls, 'al with *phaqad*. The **English upon thy walls** may be read as meaning that they were merely stationed there, while the Hebrew means that the care of the walls was committed to them. The notion of Delitzsch that the phrase merely means that

their appointment took place on the walls can hardly be entertained. **I have set upon** = I have set over, placed officially in their keeping, the walls. On the duty of these *shomerim*, "watchmen," there is dispute. The term itself means ἐπίσκοποι, *Aufseher*; it is the participle from *shamar*, "to guard" or take care of. Some are quick to identify these *shomerim* with the *tsophim* (from *tsaphah*) mentioned elsewhere, though these are *Spaeher*, guards set to spy any approaching enemy, and then to signal warning. But the distinction is made very plain when our text says of the *shomerim* that they **shall never hold their peace day or night**, i. e. be silent, *chashah*. Now, guards posted against an enemy are bound to keep quiet, and to signal only when an enemy is spied. It is admitted, too, that in our chapter no danger from outside enemies is hinted at. We need not straddle the question by saying that in one capacity these *shomerim* were guards to spy out enemies, and in another capacity guards to cry out, as the Hebrew has it, "all the day and all the night long," for we deal only with the latter work in our passage. — The matter becomes clearer when we study the next words: **ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence**. This cannot be translated, as the English margin suggests, and as commentators propose: "ye that are the Lord's remembrancers," i. e. that keep calling things to his memory, that will not let him forget, for this would demand the construction with 'el or with l^e, whereas the text has 'eth-Yahveh. The verb *zakar*, from which the participle *mazkirim* is derived, means "to think of," and when used in the sense of "to bring to mind" in connection with God it denotes: "to mention him with praise." So we drop the entire idea, that either the watchmen, or others (prophets, priests and people, teachers and hearers, as Pieper has it) are to "remember" the Lord, to keep reminding him constantly of his promises to Jerusalem that he should now ful-

fill them. It would be mighty strange that after the Lord himself assures Jerusalem so fully and completely in v. 1-5 that he will not rest until Jerusalem is made a crown of glory and a royal diadem in his hand, etc., he now should order anybody to din into his ears that he live up to these promises. Who in all good sense would appoint "overseers" for anything like this, and then, to top it off, post them on city walls? To invent a second class of persons for this reminding is only a forced expedient in trying to get out of a self-made difficulty. If this new class embraces all the people, the text would say so. — The watchmen or overseers are identical with the men who in praise mention the Lord. The assurance that they shall not keep still is identical with the command not to keep silence. All these men are the prophets of the Lord, and following them, the preachers and teachers of the Word. St. Paul states their business much like our passage: "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season," 2 Tim. 4, 2, i. e. "all the day and all the night long." They are not to cry unto the Lord, who in this chapter makes it plain that he is very ready, but to all the people, who need it even if they are true believers. The substance of what these prophets etc. are to cry out constantly is indicated in the second title given them: "yet that make mention of the Lord," i. e. whose official duty it is to name him constantly to the people by keeping before them his praises, the things he has already done plus those he has promised to do. With Jerusalem on the eve of reaching the glorious purpose for which the Lord established her, it would be a calamity if any indifference and apathy should come over her people. They must be wide awake and ready in joyous faith. The Lord himself will do all that is possible to make and keep her so. He himself will send her the necessary criers. He will post them on her walls, figuratively speaking, the walls which make her separate and safe, the city that she is, the walls

from which the voice of the criers shall sound to her from every side. 'Al domi lakem = "no resting for you!"

The translation of v. 7: **Give him no rest, till etc.**, reflects the mistaken idea that the watchmen etc. are to keep the Lord agitated day and night. Even the margin: "Give him no silence," may be read in that sense. Note that *domi* is identical here with *dami* in v. 6. It is the same silence or resting in both verses, i. e. on the part of the watchmen. The Lord having ordered them not to hold their peace day or night, they are not to come at any time with silence and offer that to him. *Domi* is not rest in general at all, for its opposite is not that one bestir himself, but that one shout and cry aloud. So here *domi* simply cannot mean that these watchers are not to let the Lord keep still and silent, but are to make him keep shouting aloud. The very idea would be preposterous. In v. 7 it is Isaiah who urges the watchmen to do their duty as their office requires. Telling them not to offer silence to "him," i. e. the Lord, implies that the Lord who appoints them to their office will ask an account from them in the end. They must be found faithful when that hour arrives. — The watchmen are not to hold their peace in proclaiming the Lord's praiseworthy works and promises, **till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth**, and thus carry out his covenant promise. The wrong exegesis of the preceding lines makes it appear as if the Lord himself might forget his promise. Now men might forget, not the Lord. Only in an anthropopathic way is forgetting ever ascribed to the Lord, and there is no trace of it here. The two 'al here refer to the time duly fixed by the Lord; they point to the "fulness of time." The polel *y^okonen*, from *kun*, cannot mean "found" Jerusalem, but must mean *herrichten*, "fit up." Jerusalem was founded, her walls stood, but there was still much to do in fitting her out for her

grand purpose. *Y^ekonen* refers to all that may yet be necessary to do; and then *yasim*, from *sim-sum*, refers to the final result: "make Jerusalem a praise in the earth," namely place or set her before men as such. Koenig renders *th^ehillah* in our passage with "praiseworthy city"; we may say "an object of praise." All over the earth the Lord's object concerning "Jerusalem," his Church, will eventually be attained. Her name shall be known far and wide. Not that all men will praise her, but that in all lands some will praise her, namely as the Lord's portal of salvation, is what the statement signifies. This is the climax; compare v. 3.

Isaiah puts a mighty Amen under it, Jehovah's oath: **The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength.** "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation," etc. Heb. 6, 17 etc.; comp. v. 13. Whether the "right hand" means one thing, and "the arm of his strength" another, is hard to decide. Delitzsch: "the right, which he raises only for truth; the mighty arm, which irresistibly executes what is promised." Yet the right hand of God in the Scriptures, when mentioned alone, always denotes his power and majesty; so that in our passage one may well assume that the addition: "and by the arm of his strength," is only definitive: the right hand and arm, namely the Lord's omnipotence. — Now follows the oath itself: **Surely I will no more give etc.**, lit.: "Whether I will once more give," etc. The perfect tense is used in oaths. Once Israel's corn was indeed eaten by her enemies, and the sons of the stranger, foreigners did drink the wine of vineyards which Israel had planted, while Israel was far away in the captivity of Babylon and colonists from there possessed her

lands. This shall not happen again: they that gather the corn shall eat it, and they that collect the grapes to press them for wine shall drink it. This general statement, which would also apply to the sons of the stranger while he possessed the land, is made specific of Israel by two additions. The first of these, **and praise the LORD**, goes with "thy corn" and expresses the gratitude of his people truly devoted to him. The second, **in the courts of my holiness**, goes with the wine. However, what is said of the corn also applies to the wine and vice versa, both of these additions pointing to the legal requirement Deut. 14, 22-27, of taking a tenth of the harvest to the sacred courts there to be consumed joyfully by the people bringing it, together with the Levites and the poor. This sworn promise of the Lord does not mean merely that the nation of the Jews brought back from the Babylonian exile shall never again be deported, but live in the Holy Land possessing it in peace. This promise is of the new Israel in which the covenant made with the fathers will reach its consummation. Old Israel, including that of Isaiah's time, was unfaithful, and for her sins had to suffer invasion, oppression, and eviction. This includes also the Israel in the days of Christ, whose land was devastated, Jerusalem and the Temple leveled to the ground, vast numbers slain, 90,000 sold into slavery, and the nation as a nation rejected permanently of the Lord. The new Israel is the true Church, which the Lord will never need to disown because of sin and defection; not a national Israel at all, but a spiritual Israel made up of believers from all nations: God their God, and they his people. Their blessed spiritual condition is characterized in the Old Testament way. If the nation Israel had been true and faithful, as it was not, then this nation would have possessed its land and the products thereof in peace and would have consumed the tenth with praise in the Lord's holy courts. The spiritual Israel which

the Lord will gather for himself shall indeed be true to him, for none but believers can belong to her; and the Lord will bless this Israel with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. They shall celebrate their thanksgivings and harvest homes "and praise the Lord," "in the courts of my holiness," now no longer the earthly Temple at Jerusalem (it has long disappeared), but wherever they gather to worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him, John 4, 21-23. Millennialists will make this new Israel the converted Jewish nation during the last thousand years. Some muddle the entire oath, leaving us in the dark as to what it really promises. Perhaps we should add that this oath does not mean earthly prosperity and freedom from tribulation for all who constitute the new Israel. They shall in the first place be disciplined for their sins (comp. the text for The Fifth Sunday after Trinity), and in the second place as true confessors in an evil world they, like their master, shall bear the cross. But even so, the Lord's oath holds for them, and whether they have much or only little of this earth they will praise him in his holy courts, and never like the Israel of the flesh forsake his courts, run after other gods, and abuse the Lord's earthly gifts.

10. **Go through, go through the gates;
prepare ye the way of the people;
cast up, cast up the highway; gather out
the stones;
lift up a standard for the people.**
11. **Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the
end of the world,
Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold
thy salvation cometh;
behold, his reward is with him,
and his work before him.**

- 12. And they shall call them, The holy people,
The redeemed of the LORD:
and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A
city not forsaken.**

And so the divine world-wide mission of Jerusalem and her people shall indeed be fulfilled. For "Jerusalem" ever stood in the Lord's eyes, just as it ever shall stand, for his true people only, the Israel not of mere flesh, but of faith. Since the days of Christ this Israel has become an attraction all through the world, so that v. 10 is virtually nothing but an Old Testament version of Matth. 28, 19: "Go ye therefore and teach (disciple) all nations," etc. — Let us dismiss at once the interpretation which, like that of Delitzsch, reads these three verses of the return from the Babylonian exile and the gathering of the Jewish diaspora. He is sure: "These cannot be Gentiles." That of Aug. Pieper is no better, written as it seems to be under the influence of Delitzsch: that those gathered to the Holy City are "the children of Zion dwelling among the nations," "the children of Israel." He tells us not only Babylon is meant as the place whence these children of Israel are to come, but all the Gentile cities where the scattered Israelites dwell. And these men write such exegesis in the face of passages in Isaiah like 2, 2 etc.; 11, 10; 60, 3 and 14; and in our own chapter verses 1-2. Let us put it down here with all positiveness: not even the imagery of the return from exile, whether out of Babylon or other Gentile cities, is used in our three verses! The crowning glory of Jerusalem is not in that or any other mere return from exile. Her crowing glory is this, that when her salvation is come (Christ) all the ends of the earth flow unto her. The Jerusalem in Palestine was merely national, the Jerusalem of the Christian Church is world-wide. That pre-Christian Jerusalem, in so far as it was spiritual, was still only

national, her true children being with negligible exceptions believing Jews; the Christian Jerusalem has lost the middle wall of partition, Eph. 2, 14, the distinction between Jew and Gentile, and stands forth as the great *Una Sancta*, the One Communion of Saints. Like Isaiah, St. Paul was enraptured by her greatness and her glory.

In dramatic fashion a voice calls out: **Go through, go through the gates, etc.** In chapter 40 the prophet says it is "a voice" crying thus, though without revealing the crier's name. In our text the voice is indicated only by what it utters. Of course, the commands uttered are the Lord's, no matter what voice or whose voice he is using. But now the divergence begins. Who is addressed? Pieper assures us that it leads to misconceptions to think that definite persons are addressed; yet in his discussion he speaks of "heralds." Delitzsch thinks the exiles in Babylon are addressed. Now it makes a world of difference in the entire interpretation, this decision who is addressed. The only persons named by the text itself to whom commands are addressed are the "watchmen" in v. 6. And when we consider the new commands now given they certainly agree with the duties of prophets and spiritual leaders. To reckon with Pieper on this point: who are his "heralds" if not these "watchmen"? The "exiles" of Delitzsch are a bare, blank assumption. — But the trouble continues: what **gates** are these? and what does **go through** mean, out of the gates, or into the gates? Orelli, Hitzig, Knobel, Delitzsch and Daechsel answer: pass *out of* the gates of Babylon, or the exile cities. Pieper ventures: pass *into* the gates of the exile cities. Duhm, Drechsler reply: pass into the gates of the Temple. But gates are in walls, and the only walls that have been mentioned are the walls of Jerusalem. If the gates now mentioned are in other walls that certainly should be indicated. In addition note the context:

prepare the way of the people; build up the highway; gather the loose stones. This settles the matter: these are not the gates of Gentile cities, either to be entered, or to pass out of, nor the Temple gates, but the gates of Jerusalem. The whole context speaks of a grand preparation for a vast influx of people into the Holy City. The crowds for whom the roads are to be made ready are not exiles returning home, for absolutely nothing points to them; they are the people from all over the world who have heard the Lord's proclamation (the Gospel) and are drawn to Jerusalem (the Church). So the sense is perfectly clear: Jerusalem's watchmen are to get everything ready for this great influx. It would be in harmony with this new duty to think of these watchmen (prophets and teachers) to lead those already in the City out through her gates to prepare the roads for the coming crowds. — That leaves one point to be cleared up, the double and therefore very emphatic command: **Go through, go through the gates!** Is that command only incidental to the working parties getting onto the roads for making them ready? It hardly seems so; circumstantial and incidental acts are never thus emphasized. The emphasis would have to be on the main action. Here it would have to be: "Prepare ye, prepare ye the way of the people." So we must conclude that *'ibru, 'ibru bashsh'arim* means more than merely passing out of the gates to work on the roads. The verb *'abar* has among its meanings also that of passing along, and *b'* following the verb names the stations. So we should translate: "Pass along, pass along the gates!" i. e. go from one to the other and see that all are in order for the coming influx. Compare Is. 26, 1-2. The gates must all be in repair, easy to open full wide. They must be attended to first; after that the roads.—But note how v. 10 is constructed: the first and the third line have each a double imperative, and these double imperatives are followed in each case by a

single one (second, and fourth line) as a kind of added explanation. So we read: **Prepare ye the way of the people**, not of the roads outside of the City, which are fully taken care of in the next two lines, but of the passage into the gates of the City. The gates are to be inspected (and if necessary repaired) in order that they may afford unimpeded entrance into the City for all the coming people. Whoever comes to the City, and no matter how many come, shall find the gate he reaches open, and no matter on what road and from what direction he comes, ready to let him in. Now in the New Testament era, whoever comes to the Church, ready to be taken in by repentance, faith, confession, and Baptism, is to find the gate open to let him in. All human commandments, traditions, errors, false doctrine, and all other junk and barricades are to be completely removed.

First the gates, then the roads to the gates: **cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones.** Among the vagaries and comicalities of exegesis must be reckoned the idea of Delitzsch, all duly printed in his book, that this command is addressed to the vanguard of the returning exiles — they are to reconstruct the roads for the great body of the exiles! And to think that the entire section has nothing to do with exiles, vanguard or rearguard! The same people who are to see to the gates are also to see to the roads. To cast up the highway, *salal*, means to fill in the washouts and places that have become worn and impassable. In Hebrew the word for “highway” is from the verb “cast up,” making a fine alliteration. — “Gather out the stones” is usually read of the roadbed in general, removing any loose stones that may have worked up. But it may mean to remove stones that have rolled down in places where the highway has been cut through hills or along hillsides. The verb *saqal* itself means “to free of stones,” and *me’eben* is added pleonastically. The general sense of the two lines is

the same as that of the preceding two: as all that would hinder ingress into the gates is to be removed, so also all that would hinder free passage on the highways, in particular everything that would act as a stumbling-block, Is. 57, 14; 40, 4.

The final line of v. 10: **lift up a standard for the people**, again upsets the commentators. Pieper makes it "against" the nations among whom the exiles dwell, while he assumes the readiness of these nations to let the exiles depart. Delitzsch and Orelli think the standard is for the exiles, "so that the diaspora of all localities may join the returning hosts aided by the nations." This exegesis first carries its ideas into the text, then fetches them out. Now the preposition 'al means "above" or "over," and certainly not "against." Here it is with the plural: "over the peoples," or nations. When a standard is raised (the verb is the hiphil of *rum*) over a city or a regiment, it is intended for that city or regiment, not for somebody else that has not even been mentioned. The entire question concerning the **standard** is cleared up when we compare the passage in Isaiah on "ensign," "banner," and "standard," 5, 26; 11, 12; 13, 2; 18, 3; and our passage. This is a favorite figure with Isaiah, and its sense is made plain by the addition in 13, 2: "shake the hand," i. e. wave it in signaling, and in 49, 22: "I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles," as a signal. To lift up a standard means, in the language of Isaiah, to signal someone, here to signal *ha'ammim*, the nations. With the gates all in order, the highways in perfect shape, the last thing is to give the signal to the nations that whoever will may come. The fulfillment of it all began at Pentecost. Then the signal was given for all men to come. That signal is the preaching of the Gospel to all men in all tongues. The Gospel is the "standard," and to preach it is "to lift" that standard.

V. 11 is the sum of the Gospel. The Lord here hands to his watchmen the very standard with which they are to signal the nations. It is the great message that the Savior is come in Israel. Now all men may find salvation in him. The same voice is speaking as before, and in the same dramatic fashion: **Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, etc.** Isaiah uses *hinneh*, "behold," even with the perfect, prophetically of the future; in other words, what the prophet sees in the future as an actual reality he states as something already actually accomplished. So this proclamation of the Lord is the one that went out into all the world after Christ had accomplished his redemptive work. It was made by the apostles and their successors. And viewing from afar this wonderful act of the Lord, Isaiah could well write: "Behold." — Now the proclamation is: **Say ye to the daughter of Zion, etc.** Who is addressed? Who is to say this to the Israelite believers? The same servants of the Lord who are addressed in v. 10, and whose appointment is mentioned in v. 6. But remember: all the world is to hear what the Lord here orders announced to the daughter of Zion. For though it concerns her in a peculiar manner, as the fulfillment of the Lord's ancient promise to her, it concerns all the world likewise, since the promise to her was to include in the end all men everywhere. The exegesis which dreams of the ends of the world or the nations merely hearing this proclamation of the Lord as a signal to them to let the dispersed Jews travel back to Jerusalem, the while these nations stay where they are, is so preposterous in every way that one wonders how any man can fall for it. — The announcement to be made to the believers in Zion in the hearing of the whole world is great and blessed indeed: **Behold thy salvation cometh, etc.** Note again this exclamation "behold." The English present tense "cometh" blurs the sense; *ba'* (from *bo'*) means "is come" or

“has come” and thus is here. “Thy salvation,” as in 49, 6, mentions the thing in place of the person: thy Savior, as the pronouns in the next lines show: “his reward,” “his work.” The announcement of this tremendous fact is like the very highest felicitation for the true Israel; at the same time this felicitation of Israel is the happiest proclamation that could possibly be made to the world in general. It is the “standard” or signal for all the world now to hasten to Jerusalem or the daughter of Zion (the Christian Church) to share with her this great salvation. — In order to bring out fully what is meant by *yish'ek*, another “behold” follows: **behold his reward is with him**, i. e. the Savior indicated by this “salvation,” **and his work before him**. The words are a repetition of 40, 10. What is this “reward,” and this “work,” far better translated “recompense” in the margin? Delitzsch makes the “reward” punishment for the enemies, and the “recompense” graciousness for the faithful; others reverse the interpretation: “reward” for the faithful, “recompense” for the hostile. Now *sakar* is always used of reward in a good sense, and *ph'ullah* of recompense almost always, save in exceptional contexts. So the two are synonymous here. They are both intended to give us an idea of what the “salvation” is which this Savior has brought. Pieper, in connection with 40, 10, interprets the two expressions of “the restitution, the gracious leading, and the final complete glorification of Israel.” But this is rather general, and worst of all pertains only to Israel or Jewish believers. A. Pfeiffer interprets both terms as referring to Christ: the reward he receives — Israel; the merit (recompense) he earns — covering for sin. But this misunderstands “with him” and “before him,” as well as the two nouns. The reward and the recompense are the Lord’s salvation. They make the announcement to faithful Israel such a joy and delight, and this announcement in the ears of the

world the thing that draws so many from all nations to the Church where this Savior stands with his reward and recompense ready to bestow on all who come to him. This is the "reward" of grace to all faithful believers. It is **with him** — he who has come carries it in his hand to dispense it generously. This is the "recompense" of his grace for all who return again to him after having for a time turned away from him. It is **before him** — he has laid it openly in front of him, and all who return to him may take "double" for what once they had to suffer in punishment, 40, 2; 61, 7; 60, 17. No wonder Jerusalem is crowded!

Now comes the final touch in v. 12: **And they shall call them**, namely the watchmen who have been executing the Lord's commands down to the final grand proclamation in the ears of the whole world, they shall call all those who fill the Holy City (the Church), **The holy people**, or "people of holiness," dedicated and set apart for the Lord as his own; **The redeemed of the LORD**, whom he ransomed, purchased with a price, to be his own. These titles refer to all the saved, whether of Jewish or Gentile extraction, never only of the returned Jewish exiles. Their holiness is due to the forgiveness of their sins, so that in the same sense they are also called "the righteous." And in the term "the redeemed" lies the whole work of Christ as recorded in Is. 53. — To these wonderful titles for the people crowding the City are added corresponding titles for her: **and thou shalt be called**, not only by the watchmen, but by all who dwell in thee as well: **Sought out**, *d^erushah* from *darash*, "to seek," a fitting title for the City that has come to be the cynosure of so many hearts; and the second title is on the same order: **A city not forsaken**, *ne'ezabah*, from *'azab*, 3rd person, sing., perfect, and not the participle. Because she is sought out she is not forsaken. Those who have come within

her gates never would leave her. — And so the prophecy is complete: the Lord's plan concerning Jerusalem realized.

SUGGESTIONS

What has so greatly discouraged Old Testament preaching, and has spoiled much of it that has been attempted, is the inadequate, faulty, wrong exegesis, plus the temerity that looks only at the English translation and then blazes away. The present text is a case in point. After the debris of wrong interpretation is cleared away the text stands forth so beautiful and grand in its true meaning that almost anyone will be able to preach the right kind of sermon on it. The plain subject of this text is *the Christian Church*. This subject is placed at this point in the story of *the Godly Life* because one of the essential features of that Life is that *its home is in this Church*. The godly man is one of that wonderful citizenry called "The holy people" and "The redeemed of the Lord." He dwells spiritually in the greatest City in the world, whose name is more than a mere identification tag, a name that really describes her: Jerusalem, City of Peace; "Sought Out," the home and joy of all God's children. What a great, what an attractive subject to preach on! Isaiah saw this City some 800 years in advance of her full glory, and describes to us how the Lord brought her up to be the one city "Sought Out" in the whole world. We who live in her ought to know her story and her glory.

The Greatest City in the World.

I. Her story; II. Her Glory.

I. Jerusalem of the old covenant; often disciplined for the sins of her people, v. 8-9; yet continued as Israel's spiritual center till the appointed time. — Jerusalem of the new covenant; now spiritual altogether as the Church of Jesus Christ, with all believers her citizens, growing ever greater through the ages, v. 6-7 and 10-11. — II. The Savior, with his reward and recompense; her holy and redeemed people; her watchmen who proclaim the Savior's message; her own glorious name "Sought Out" and "Not Forsaken." — Conclusion: "Savior, since of Zion's City I through grace a member am, let the world deride or pity, I will glory in thy name." — V. 3 of "Glorious things of Thee are spoken." —

The Godly Man Dwells in the City of God.

- I. *In the City of God*, which is: 1) The spiritual Jerusalem, the Church; 2) The City of Salvation; 3) "Sought Out" of the nations; 4) Whose happiness no power shall ever destroy.
- II. *The godly man dwells*: 1) Brought thither by the Lord; 2) Amid the people redeemed and holy; 3) Under the Savior's reward and recompense; 4) Never to lose the happiness that is his.

The effort to make this a text on the ministry, instead of on the Church, leads to very unsatisfactory results. For at best the mention of the "watchman" is only incidental to Isaiah's vision of the New Testament Church and her spiritual glory and attractiveness. Besides, these "watchmen" were at first the Old Testament prophets, and the present Christian ministry have duties in the Church now fully established in her Christian form. Far better are outlines which deal with the Church as such and what the Lord has made of her, or with the dwellers in this Church and the salvation they enjoy. On the latter kind the following may prove suggestive: Introduction: The wonderful City the Lord has prepared for his people, namely, the Christian Church. Isaiah pictures that City and the blessedness of those that dwell there. We dwell in that City now and her blessings are actually ours day by day.

Zion's Happy Children.

- I. *Think what they inherit!* All that the Lord has done through long ages in making Zion what she is, a praise in all the earth.
- II. *Look under whom they live!* The Savior with his reward and double recompense of grace.
- III. *Mark who are their associates!* The holy people, cleansed from sin and justified. The redeemed of the Lord, bought by him and treasured as his own.

Conclusion: Who would not love to be one of them? Who that is one of them would ever separate from them?

Do not allegorize the "walls" of Jerusalem. One man has done it, and even invented pinnacles on those walls, and then allegorized these! All such homiletical skylarking is of evil.

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Jer. 23, 16-29

Seven texts have shown us the vital features of the Godly Life. We observe at once that our present text strikes a different note. It is a warning against false prophets, just like the old gospel for the day, Matth. 7, 15-23. Now in all the regular pericope lines The Tenth Sunday after Trinity marks an incision. In the old gospel line this Sunday presents Christ weeping over Jerusalem and foretelling her destruction. It is the Sunday that warns us mightily against unbelief. In our Old Testament series we have a similar text, one in which the Lord warns Israel against unbelief, and tells them under what conditions only he "will cause you to dwell in this place," even using for the desecration of the Temple the striking expression "den of robbers." We accordingly take together as a small sub-cycle in the after-Trinity line of texts the three for the Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Sunday after Trinity. These three deal with *the Dangers That Threaten the Godly Life*. The first one points out *the danger arising from false prophets*, Jer. 23, 16-29; the second points to *the danger coming from false independence*, Prov. 16, 1-9, and the third warns us against *the danger due to unbelief*, Jer. 7, 1-11. Naturally a sub-cycle like this is bound to be brief. We may note, too, that in the first sub-cycle of eight texts we rose from one grand height to another, ending with the glories of the Spiritual Jerusalem. The second sub-cycle leads us downward; there are no heights; the last of its three text goes way down to the desecration which turns the very Temple of God

into a "den of robbers" and plainly intimates Israel's total expulsion from the sacred precincts.

We are in the second part of Jeremiah's prophecies which embraces chapters 21 to 33 and contains special prophecies concerning the punishment through Chaldea and concerning the Messianic salvation. They are special since time and place are plainly indicated. The Lord here deals with the leaders of the people, in particular their kings and their prophets. In the moral and religious decline of any nation its leaders are not only involved, but because of their very position either help to stay or help greatly to hasten that decline. So Jeremiah was sent to warn and threaten Judah's kings ("pastors"), and did it in no uncertain language, 21, 1-23, 8. Next he deals in the same unglorified fashion with the false prophets, 23, 9-40. Our text comprises v. 16-29.

16. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Harken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. 17. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

These two verses characterize the prophets against whom the Lord warns. Jeremiah's own heart broke at the thought of the terrible judgment impending over these prophets, 23, 9, and now he gives us the Lord's own word concerning that judgment: **Thus said the LORD of hosts, Yahveh ts'eba'oth**, the unchanging covenant Lord at whose command all the hosts of heaven move. Would that all preachers were duly impressed with the greatness and majesty of him with whom they have to do. Jeremiah gives us the Lord's words as he received them from the Lord. That

is Verbal Inspiration. Think how many present day prophets scoff at the very idea. — The Lord begins with a peremptory and solemn warning: **Hearken not etc.** The people are meant; they are not to listen to the words or statements of false prophets. — At once two reasons are added. The first is: **they make you vain, mahbilim**, the hiphil participle from *habal*, causing you to entertain vain hopes, if you listen to them. Now the idols are called “lying vanities,” Jonah 2, 9, and in general are described as empty nonentities as over against the reality who is God. False prophets turned Judah from God to these idols, and thus made the people vain. This damnable effect is mentioned as the first reason. — The second is: **they speak a vision of their own heart, not out of the mouth of the LORD.** They use damnable means, namely lies. Their visions are pretended, and the words they say they have heard are ideas of their own, self-invented, not words out of the Lord’s mouth, such as true prophets always speak. Here we have a hint, how the Lord communicated his messages; “out of the mouth of the LORD” is Verbal Inspiration. To-day “out of the mouth of the Lord” is by the mediation of his written inspired Word; whoever teaches and preaches, even in one point, otherwise, profanes the name of the Lord among us. To whatever extent a man does this to that extent he is a false prophet.

V. 17 specifies more closely. First: **“They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said.** The infinitive absolute *'amor* added to the finite verb expresses duration or repetition: “they keep saying.” *Na'ats* means “to consider despicable,” and the piel participle: “my contemners.” To men who have no use for the real words of the Lord they speak spurious words as coming from the Lord, such words as are agreeable to the ears of these men. Paul writes, 2 Tim. 4, 3: “after their own lusts shall they heap unto themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they

shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." It is a strange phenomenon that people who will not listen to what God actually tells them, still want to imagine that the lies they love to listen to are God's Word. It is bad enough to preach and to believe lies, but far worse to ascribe these lies to God. So things are called "Christian" to-day which are completely anti-Christian. Among the terrible things to-day the most terrible is to label as a saying of God something that he never said. — One such lie is stated: **Ye shall have peace, shalom, Unversehrtheit,** nothing shall hurt you, who despise the Lord and what he really says. This is exactly what men want to be assured of now when they spurn Christ, faith in his blood, etc. When they die they want some fool preacher to say *shalom, shalom*, he went to heaven, and to read some text out of the Bible as if the Lord himself said it. And the ungodly who witness the thing are thereby assured that all is well with them too, that God says so. — A second specification is added: **and they say unto every one that walketh in the imagination of his own heart, etc.** In the Hebrew this is put absolute: "and every one etc., they say (in regard to him)," etc. And "in the imagination of his own heart" should read: "in the stubbornness, or in the obduracy, of his own heart." This *sh'eriruth* is the settled hardness of unbelief in the Lord's real Word. We have it in two forms: the one openly mocks what the Lord says (skepticism of all kinds); and the other claims to accept that Word, but makes free with its interpretation (all forms of rationalism). — Now the horrible thing is that these false prophets say in regard to such hardened rejecters of the real Word: **No evil shall come upon you, ra'ah,** fem. from *ra'*. This lying assurance is the negative expression for the positive form of it in the first case mentioned: to have *shalom* is to escape *ra'ah*, and vice versa. Note how simple, clear, and direct,

and how utterly convincing this specified proof is. And yet preachers and hearers read it, and without the quiver of an eyelash go on as before preaching peace where there is none, and denying evil where it actually is, and even piled up high.

18. For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word and heard it? 19. Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. 20. The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. 21. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. 22. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

The conviction of these prophets as false is carried to its conclusion. They know nothing of the Lord's real counsel and word, v. 18; which is set down fully now as evidence, v. 19-20; and the Lord positively disowns them, v. 21; and justifies his act by stating what the effect would have been if they had had his Word, v. 22. — **For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word?** implies a negative answer: No one. *Mi* is the interrogative "who?" not the indefinite "whosoever," since the latter meaning for *mi* is at best only probable. So we decline to follow those who would change the question into a declaration: "For whoever hath stood etc., must perceive and hear" etc. We decline the more since this reading necessitates textual changes. Some commentators have a penchant for doctoring the text. Keil assumes that the negative answer excludes

only the false prophets, not the true ones, because the Lord reveals his counsel to them. But he misconceives what standing in the counsel of the Lord really means. *Sod* is an assembly or council, the circle of those sitting together to advise and decide (Koenig); hence also '*amad*, "to stand" in the council, take part in it. If *sod* is translated "counsel," as in our version, it must mean the act of counselling. Of course, neither the false nor the true prophets took part in such a council. The extension of the question: "and hath perceived and heard his word?" means to say: perceived and heard it as a participant in the council. No man can claim such a thing.—The second question has the same sense: **who hath marked his word, and heard it?** Who was present when the Lord decided what he would do, and at the end of the counselling gave the decision? Who "marked" it, *qashab*, noticed or paid close attention to it, and thus "heard," *shama'*, or grasped it? The evident answer is: no one. This second question is plainer even than the first. The implication in these two questions is, that the false prophets must presumptuously claim they were right there when the Lord held counsel, stood in the council assembly, paid attention and heard his decision. For in two ways only can a man really know the Lord's counsel, either the Lord must reveal and tell him after the decision is made, or the man must be right there when the decision is made. Now the Lord never revealed or told a thing to these false prophets. Now when they claim: "The Lord hath said," they must presumptuously mean this preposterous thing, that they stood by and heard right in the Lord's own council chamber. And that is actually how these false prophets and preachers talk. They boldly contradict the revealed Word and will of the Lord. When they handle it they tell us it does not mean what it says; they talk as if they had inside private knowledge of what it really means. Where could they have gotten

that? They must have been right in the council chamber when the Lord made his decision! Or did they have their ear at the keyhole of the council door? V. 18 is a beautiful *reductio ad absurdum*.

Now v. 19 states what the actual counsel of the Lord is. It is the absolute opposite of what the false prophets claim it is. When they claim it is "peace," that counsel is "whirlwind"; and when they say it is "no evil," it is "anger" to the utmost. So they are liars, the worst liars in the world, for they lie about the Lord and his Word. **Behold**, for this is tremendous indeed, **a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury**. The figurative "whirlwind," *sa'ar*, is at once explained by the Hebrew apposition "fury," *chemah*. Literally translated: "a whirlwind of the Lord, (namely) fury, is gone forth," *yats'ah*. *Chemah* is the burning heat of wrath. A second apposition intensifies the figure: **even a grievous whirlwind**. *Sa'ar*, which is here repeated, really means "storm," and the cyclone idea is in the term translated "grievous," *mithcholel*, the hithpolel from *chul*, "to twist" or whirl: "even a whirling storm." Decidedly different from "peace" and "no evil"!—The next statement completes the thought by adding whom this storm shall strike: **it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked**, *yachul*, the kal again from *chul*: "it shall whirl upon the head of the wicked," the very persons assured of "peace" and "no evil" by the false prophets. However, "the wicked" are not merely they who do wicked deeds, but also all who refuse to accept the Word out of his mouth, i. e. all unbelievers. A better translation avoids the second apposition above: "Behold a storm from Yahveh, fury goes forth; and a whirling storm shall whirl upon the head of the wicked."

What is thus said figuratively is put literally in v. 20, and at the same time made complete: **The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have**

executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart. That whirling storm is Yahveh's "anger." No need to speak of its going forth, as that has already been done; but it shall not "return," or turn from its object, until the Lord's object is accomplished. *Mezimmoth libbo* are "the plans of his heart." The two verbs, 'asah and qum (hiphil infinitive: "till he have erected") are used for intensification; but, as Keil points out, both of them, and especially the latter, go beyond the overthrow of the kingdom of Judah, for they include all the Lord's discipline and judgments till the glorification of his kingdom at the end of days. — That is made plain also by the final addition: **in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.** 'Acharith hayyamim is eschatologic, "the end of the days," i. e. of time, namely the Messianic future, when the present world-age reaches its close. Then all things that seem dark now will be fully revealed. The hithpoel *hithbonen*, "ye shall understand," is strengthened by the cognate *binah*, "understanding," hence: "ye shall understand completely." False prophets may deceive now and lead many astray, even into final destruction, and thousands will not understand; but when the end comes they will understand perfectly.

All that has been said makes it certain beyond a doubt: **I have not sent these prophets**, they have no commission or message from me, and I have not inspired them; **yet they ran** of their own accord, pretending I had sent them with a message they must deliver. The verb *rutz* is used of prophets because they must hasten to deliver any message they received from the Lord. There is still a peculiar running among false preachers. They seem driven to spread their false doctrines, often showing fanatical zeal. — A second statement elucidates the first: **I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied** as if I had spoken to them. To prophesy is to repeat the Lord's

Word. Having received no such Word a man can only pretend to prophesy.

V. 22 finally settles the presumptuous implication that these pretenders stood in the Lord's counsel or assembly and thus had obtained the really true and correct words of the Lord contradictory to those of the true prophets. **But if they had stood in my counsel**, assuming for the moment this impossibility in order to convict them by their own presumptuous attitude, **and had caused my people to hear my words**, also assuming that they had actually in that assembly heard my words and so could do such a thing, what then would have been the result? Something absolutely different from what now is the result of their prophesying: **then they should have turned them from their evil, and from their evil doings**; but now their work has exactly the opposite result, the people are not only left, they are even confirmed, in their evil way and doings. A regular syllogism lies embedded in this statement.

The Lord's words always turn men from evil ways and doings.

The words of these prophets did not turn men from evil ways and doings.

Therefore the words of these prophets are not the Lord's words.

The argument, too, is based on the correspondence of cause and effect, i. e. the effect cannot contradict the cause. Apply the Lord's words (cause), and you drive out evil (effect). You cannot apply the Lord's words (cause), and thereby encourage and fortify evil (effect). If unbelief and sin keep on thriving undisturbed (effect), what you apply is beyond question *not* the Lord's words (cause), but something else, falsifications of his words, substitutes for them, vital omissions from them. "Ye shall know them by their fruits," Matth. 7, 16, by the doctrine they preach, for

if it be the Lord's doctrine it will be full of faith and good works in those that bring it and those that receive it; and if it is some other doctrine it will be lacking in both on the part of those that bring it and that receive it.

23. Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? 24. Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD. 25. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. 26. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; 27. Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. 28. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. 29. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

Let not the false prophets persuade themselves that the Lord is unaware of their falseness. The three questions in v. 23-24 are each marked by the solemn assurance: **saith the Lord**, *neum Yahveh*, "statement of Jehovah," each question having this seal appended to it. All three questions imply their answers, and the final one elucidates what the two previous ones imply. **Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off?** He most certainly is a God "afar off" as well as "at hand." What an unworthy conception of God lies in the falseness of these and all other false prophets and teachers, as if he were so far away that he did not know what they were doing. Ps. 139, 7-12.

Si vis peccare, o homo, quaere tibi locum, ubi Deus non videat, Augustine. "Go on mocking, God endures it for a time and does not at once strike with thunderbolts, but he will not always keep silence, but will speak in his wrath soon enough," Starke. The constant nearness of God is a great comfort to all true preachers of his Word, who have the assurance that he hears and acknowledges them; but this nearness should be a terror to all deniers and perverters of his Word, who have the assurance that he hears them, too, and is bound to bring them to book. — The second question completes the idea. In the first we have God as possibly too far away; in the second we have men possibly able to get away from him: **Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him?** What an unworthy conception of God must he have who supposes such a thing. Even to whisper false doctrine is to be fully exposed to God. — That is made plain by the third question: **Do not I fill heaven and earth?** which is equal to the most positive assertion that he does indeed fill both. To fill heaven and earth is a simple description of God's omnipresence. There is present, *non solum potentia et providentia, sed et essentia* of God, Calov. No finite mind is able to grasp and visualize this infinite attribute of God, but the simplest mind is able to grasp and visualize the practical significance of what this attribute means. God sits as a hearer beneath every pulpit, stands behind the preacher's desk and looks at every line he writes in his study, yea, has his ear on the preacher's heart and hears the beat of every thought in his breast far better than the physician hears the heart-beats with his stethoscope. — Very well then: **I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed**, when the Lord never sent them a dream, i. e. a revelation through the medium of a dream. Men are often readily deceived,

especially in what is to the liking of their flesh; God, never. He hears every lie for exactly what it is; and let us add, also every fractional lie.

God knows exactly and fully what these prophets claim. More than that—he knows also their real purpose and aim, which is to make people forget the Lord's name, i. e. the real revelation he has made of himself. There is difficulty about the construction. The English translation ignores the interrogative prefix attached to *yesh*, and makes the sentence read: **How long shall this be in the heart etc.** With '*ad*' already marking a question, the second interrogative prefix cannot be explained. Likewise that *yesh* should here be construed with a participle instead of the infinitive with *le*. The solution is that we have two questions. The first is elliptical: **How long** (shall this continue)? The second extends to the end of v. 27: "Is this in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies, namely the prophets of the deceit of their own heart, — do they think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal?" The question implies that this is indeed their object. They are first characterized as prophesying **lies**, unrealities, things not so, and as **prophets of the deceit of their own heart**, *tharmith libbam*, deception conceived in their own mind. This "deceit of their own heart" shows that they have no use for the truth, like the Jews to whom Jesus had to say: "Because I tell you the truth ye believe me not," John 8, 45. How many are the preachers to-day who, when the truth is brought to them, laugh at it or begin to rage against it. They want the lies of false doctrine and practice because deceit rules their heart. Yet what false prophet did not emphatically claim to follow "his conscience"—forgetting that his conscience should be bound in the Word of God. Secondly, their ultimate purpose is

revealed: do they think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams? The verb *chashab* has the idea of planning, reckoning. But note carefully **my name**, and recall v. 17, how these lying prophets emphatically labelled their dreams just like the true prophets: "The Lord hath said!" They operated as the Lords prophets. Yet their whole effort and planning was to let the people forget (thus the hiphil of *shakach*) the Lord's "name." His name is his revelation, i. e. all that he has told us concerning himself, his grace, justice, etc., and his plan for our salvation. This is what these prophets wanted to erase from the hearts of the people, so that the people would not believe this any more, nor be governed by it in their lives. One is often amazed how false preachers go to great lengths to eradicate divine truth. They antagonize the realities concerning the Lord with all their might as if their life depended on it. They must send out their evil propaganda through every possible channel. So, too, we have the addition: **by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor**, *y^esaphpher*, piel of *saphar*, "recount," or announce in a laudatory way, each one sedulously to his *rea'*, companion or associate. — Nor is this thing new among the Israelites, hence the reference: **as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal**, Jud. 3, 7; 1 Sam. 12, 9 etc., the chief male god of the Canaanites. This last touch is significant. The false prophets against whom Jeremiah spoke did not preach Baal, yet by making the people forget the true revelation of Jehovah, and substituting their own dreams, they put themselves in the class of those old idolaters. When the truth about the Lord is gone, what is there left? Nothing but a false god, whether he be labelled "Baal," or "Jehovah," or something else.

The conclusion of our text v. 28-29 constitutes the Lord's answer to these false prophets. **The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream,**

cannot mean a true prophet receiving an actual divine message through the medium of a dream. The observation is correct, that among the media of revelation the dream is lowest, Numbers 12, 6 etc., that dreams were most subject to delusion and least subject to objective testing by others; that dreams came to be associated with magic and divination, and thus marked the false prophets who cried: "I dreamed, I have dreamed!" The dream, accordingly was little used by the Lord. What settles the matter, however, in this case is the final sentence in v. 28 in regard to the "chaff," which in this connection can signify nothing but men's dreams. So Luther's marginal note gives us the true sense: "He who cannot shut his mouth or hold his ink, let him expectorate; but let him say openly and honestly that what he preaches are his own dreams." Naegelsbach adds: "Let him leave my name in peace, and not say that what he dreams are my words, but that it is his own word and bears his own name. Of course, the false prophets know well enough that pure lies are only empty straw; for this reason they always mix in something of the genuine Word of God, so there is wheat among the straw. An outrageous mixture! This mixture is Satan's highest art, by which he at the same time furthers his work and testifies against himself." — On the other hand: **he that hath my word**, namely as a true prophet, by the revelation I have made to him, **let him speak my word faithfully**, *'emeth*, which means "reliability" or truth, and is used adverbially. That is the essential thing for every true prophet and preacher. So let him speak the Lord's Word, whether men like it or not, whether they crown his head or cut it off. — And now a clarifying figure: **What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the LORD**. *Theben*, however, is "straw," chaff is called *mots*; and *bar* is "grain," wheat is *chittah*. So the sentence reads: What is the straw to the grain?" i. e. what have the two in com-

mon? The answer is: nothing, of course. So men's dreams and the Word of the Lord have nothing in common. Let every man distinguish them well, and never look at straw as if it were grain, to say nothing of palming it off as grain; or at grain as if it were straw, and reject it accordingly. — A new figure brings out the tremendous power of the Word, against which all these unsubstantial dreams are absolutely as nothing. **Is not my word as a fire? saith the LORD.** The figure of the "fire" seems chosen with reference to that of the "straw" preceding. Fire and straw have so little in common that the fire will devour the straw if it gets near to it. Yet there are two figures in v. 29, synonymous in showing the power of the Word, by which power it may be known and is bound to prove itself. As fire the Word burns up all merely human works, 1 Cor. 3, 12 etc. — **And like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces,** intensifies the figure of the fire. Fire consumes only straw, wood, and the like. Now mere human works and achievements often look more substantial; they are like rock, *sala'*, "boulder," very solid and enduring. But the word is a hammer to shatter (*phatsats*, here the poel) and pulverize the very rock. What then of the straw of all mere human dreams, which are not even works? And what of the lies which the false prophets and preaches invent? When that mighty Word finally does its work upon them, how they will be utterly annihilated.

SUGGESTIONS

Ours is a negative text. Compare on this type of text the remarks in the suggestions on Amos 8, 11-12 for Sexagesima. Then note that to beware of false prophets means at the same time to follow true prophets; to turn from their visions means to turn to the words of the Lord's mouth; and so on through the text. There are, besides, very plain positive points in the text, such as the effect of preaching the truth in

v. 22; the omnipresence of the Lord in v. 23-24; the admonition to preach the Lord's real Word faithfully; and the description of the real power of this Word. The careful preacher will note and use these positive elements in the text in offsetting the negative features. The sum of our reflections must be: tell the people not only what to avoid, but equally what to hold to.

Introduction: — The godly life of true faith and obedience is so precious, so blessed, and leads to such a glorious end that we might well suppose all men would prize and seek it and would help each other to retain and grow in it. Alas, there are great dangers that constantly threaten it, and evil forces that are bent on wholly destroying it. The chief of these are false doctrines and false prophets who preach and teach these doctrines. So the Scriptures are full of warnings. Our text begins with such a warning:

Hearken Not Unto the Words of the False Prophets.

- I. You want the Lord's Word, not the dreams of men.*
- II. You want the truth, not lies.*
- III. You want the peace of salvation, not the peace that ends in judgment.*
- IV. You want to honor the Lord's name, not to forget it.*

The Lord Warns Us Against False Prophets.

- I. He does it by exposing them, so that we keep his truth.*
- II. He does it by disowning them, so that we keep his favor.*
- III. He does it by threatening them, so that we keep his salvation.*

God has given his godly people the great and blessed doctrine of his Word. Every divine doctrine is the unfolding of a divine reality pertaining to the salvation of our souls. God wants us to believe these doctrines, to trust the realities they reveal, and thus to save our souls. But that includes that we use these doctrines to protect ourselves against the spurious doctrines of men, their lying dreams, their perversions of the Lord's doctrines, and thus to prevent our losing his salvation. For remember, every false doctrine, like poison in food or air hurts and helps destroy our salvation. — Jeremiah, one of the Lord's true prophets shows us:

**How to Use the Great Doctrines of the Lord for the
Protection of Our Souls.**

- I. *The doctrine of divine Inspiration.*—The Lord has sent men to speak and write the words “out of the mouth of the Lord,” and we have these words in the Holy Scriptures.—We are to use these inspired words against all the lying dreams and perversions of men; we are to note that the inspired words contradict the lies of men, and therefore we are to reject these lies, and cling more tightly to the words of Inspiration. V. 21 and 16-17.
- II. *The doctrine of the divine Omnipresence.*—The Lord is present everywhere. A great comfort for all who preach his Word faithfully, v. 28. A terrible thing for all who come with their own lies. Think how the Lord is present and hears every false statement. Think how it must affect the Lord to hear men say that he said what he never said. V. 23-27. Flee the presence of false teachers; let the Lord find you only where his Word is preached, confessed, believed faithfully, v. 28.
- III. *The doctrine of the divine Wrath.*—The Lord's anger (v. 20) is his holy indignation against all who preach, teach, and live contrary to his Word. He loves, helps, protects all who preach, teach, and live in accord with his Word. False teachers deny or disregard his anger; they say: Peace! and: No evil! where the Lord says: A whirlwind! v. 19-20.—That the Lord does not strike at once must never deceive us for a moment. Let the fear of that anger protect us. See how it has destroyed the false prophets and their deluded followers.—The Lord is angry with all deceivers because he wants us to have his saving truth, and has done everything for us that we may have it. Love him for it and be faithful.
- IV. *The doctrine of the divine Power of the Word.*—The Word of the Lord always turns men from evil, by repentance and faith, v. 22; it never justifies those that despise the Lord and follow the obduracy of their own hearts, v. 16-17. By this we can test many teachers and churches.—The Word of the

Lord never makes us forget his Name, v. 27; it always does the opposite. By this we can still more protect ourselves against false teachers and churches. — The Word will eventually destroy all who oppose it, v. 20. It will, however, save all who faithfully preach and believe it.

Conclusion: Let us hold fast and rightly use the great doctrines of the Lord's Word.

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Prov. 16, 1-9

Compare the introduction to Prov. 9, 1-10, The Second Sunday after Trinity, where the structure of the mashal is explained. Our text is from the second part of Proverbs, comprising chapters 10-22, 16. Each mashal in our text contains but two lines. The connection between the sayings is not close, yet there is a connection. Each mashal is like an individual pearl, beautiful and valuable in and by itself. In our text nine of these pearls are strung together. While each is independent the nine are not unrelated or heterogeneous. They lie along one general line, namely that of *dependence on the Lord*, and thus point to one of the great dangers in the Godly Life, which is *false independence*. This indicates how our text connects with the one preceding. False prophets and false doctrine may lead us away from the Godly Life of faith and obedience, i. e. influences coming to us from the outside; but also our own hearts, by a false, prideful independence, may lead us away from the Godly Life. Against this second danger the right dependence upon the Lord will protect us. The text is positive, with but little direct negation.

1. **The preparations of the heart in man,
and the answer of the tongue *is* from the
LORD.**
2. **All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own
eyes;
but the LORD weigheth the spirits.**
3. **Commit thy works unto the LORD,
and thy thoughts shall be established.**

4. **The LORD hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.**
5. **Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD:**
though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.
6. **By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.**
7. **When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies at peace with him.**
8. **Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.**
9. **A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.**

We have taken the nine saying all together, for there seems no evident grouping possible. One thing, however, is very evident: save in verse 8 there is a coordination or a contrast between the Lord on the one side and man, godly or ungodly, on the other side. Note how in eight verses the Lord's name appears. It might have appeared also in the one verse from which it is absent, namely the eighth: "Better is a little with righteousness (and the Lord), than great revenue without right (and the Lord)." So we might draw a line down vertically through these nine verses, and put on one side of that line the Lord, and on the other, man. — Right in the first verse man (here evidently the godly man) and the Lord are put in a kind of contrast. **The preparations of the heart in man** should read in more exact translation: "For man the plannings of the heart," i. e. that part may belong to him. He on his part may busy himself with making different plans. The second line: **and the answer of the tongue is from the LORD**, certainly

beclouds the sense; the English reader will make very little out of it. We should translate: "and from Jehovah the outcome of the speech." There is a threefold pairing of terms. First: "for man" and "from Yahveh." These two are first in the two Hebrew lines and thus most emphatic. Secondly: "the plannings" and "the outcome"; man does the planning, the Lord attends to the outcome. Thirdly: "of the heart" and "of the speech"; the plans are naturally in the heart and represent what we might call man's intentions; while "the speech" is the execution of the plans, when by vocal orders or others words the plans are put into operation. There is no verb. The entire *mashal* is put into the tersest form, not one word more than is absolutely demanded. We may visualize the Hebrew thus:

For man	the plannings	of the heart.
From Yahveh	the outcome	of the speech.

On the language points we may note that the poet who composed this *mashal* loves variation; so he uses *l'* with 'adam, and *min* with Yahveh, both for the genitive of origin. *Ma'arakah*, derived from 'arak, "to arrange," means "disposition," like putting something in rows or in order, like battle array. The word is used here for a man's thoughts, plans, and ideas, when he thinks a thing over in his mind before the time comes to say the thing in words and thus to secure the object or the desired effect. *Ma'aneh*, derived from 'anah, "to answer," is "the answer" that a man gets when he puts his thoughts to the proof by speaking them to the intended person, the answer in the sense of the outcome or effect. The latter lies with the Lord, that is whether a man will obtain the effect he desires, achieve his aim or purpose, or not. Delitzsch has the strange idea that this *mashal* means: man can do the meditating as to how best to formulate some difficult problem, but the final formulation in actual

words is a matter given to man by the Lord. That is the case only occasionally. So the mashal would not be true generally.* But it is true indeed that divine providence controls the outcome i. e. whether we attain the aim or object we seek by our speech, or not.

The next mashal is related to the one preceding: **All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes.** *Zak* means "distilled," and thus metaphorically "pure," clean, blameless. A man's "ways" are his actions or courses of action. The idea is that he thinks them over carefully, and as a godly man tries to act just right and as he should. This mashal is broader than the one preceding, since it includes acts as well as mere words in the term "ways." But a man's judgment on his own ways is subject to all kinds of self-deception, sometimes gross and plain to others, sometimes very subtle. St. Paul had to say concerning himself: "I know nothing by myself," when I judge myself; "yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord," who decides whether I fall short or not, 1 Cor. 4, 4. — So here in this mashal: **but the LORD weigheth the spirits,** *thoken* from *thakan*, "to determine," and thus to measure or weigh. Note that the Lord weighs not only a man's ways; he weighs the spirits, we may say each man's personality, and thus our inmost, our most secret motives, which may be hidden even from ourselves. A practical ap-

* Dr. Allwardt always requested students coming from Hermansburg, Germany, whom he colloquized, to preach a sermon in order to show what they could do. One of these students preached and did well in the first part of the sermon, but badly muddled the second part. When asked to explain, he said regarding the two parts, that he had worked out the first part, but thought in the second "to leave something to the Holy Ghost." With a twinkle in his eye the Doctor advised the student to work out all the parts of his sermons, since "you do better work than the Holy Ghost." We cannot make the Lord responsible for the formulation of our thoughts in words.

plication may be in order here, namely that we constantly examine ourselves and all our ways in the light of the penetrating Word of God, in order to conform our ways as perfectly as possible to the Lord's will. Let us never be like the Pharisees, to whom Jesus had to say: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts"; adding to make the matter plain: "for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16, 15.

The third *mashal* is in line with the previous two: **Commit thy works unto the LORD**, prayerfully since he governs the outcome; with heart-searching, since he weighs the spirits. *Gol* is from *galal*, "to roll"; and *ma'asim* are activities, doings, and thus "works," not necessarily only contemplated works, but also works already done. To "roll them upon the Lord" means to commit them to him as regards any good results, that he may bring them to pass. This surely is true wisdom. — **And thy thoughts shall be established**, is a promise. *Machashabah*, "thought," is from *chashab*, "to calculate"; so the sense is: "thy calculations shall be established," *yikkonu*, from *kun*, "will stand," and not fail; *werden gluecken*, Delitzsch. The promise is, of course, not for the success we ourselves may have calculated in each case, the fortunate outcome we ourselves may desire with our limited vision. The Lord's thoughts are higher than ours. So the promise is, the Lord will give us the success which his wisdom and goodness deem best in our case. In that sense we shall not fail, though men may think we have failed. Yet how many Christians even make their calculations, and then do their works, without submitting them unto the Lord for his approval and blessing! "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil." James 4, 13-16.

The fourth *mashal* may be read as establishing the preceding ones. The Lord governs the outcome of our plans, weighs our spirits, blesses with success what we commit to him, because his purposes control all things, even the wicked themselves. The Vulgate, Luther, and our version translate: **The LORD hath made all things for himself**, as if the preposition *ma'an* with *l^e* (*la*) were intended by the Hebrew: "for his own sake." But this is certainly incorrect. The Hebrew has the noun *ma'aneh*, the same as in v. 1, which means "answer," and metaphorically "purpose" or object. However, in this case the noun carries both the definite article in the prefix *la*, and the suffix *-ehu*, which is an anomaly, although somewhat similar cases occur. So we must translate: "The Lord hath made all for the purpose set by him," i. e. for his purpose, a definite one that is his, in being predetermined by him. *Pha'al* is poetical for "to make." *Kol*, "all," stands bare, so that our version translates: "all things." The second line, however, speaks of "the wicked," namely a person, which warrants the conclusion that *kol* in the first line is also meant of persons: "all men." Though, of course, if the Lord made all men for the purpose he had in mind, he certainly did not make the other creatures without purpose on his part. The Lord, then, had a specific object and purpose in making each one of us. The second line, in regard to the wicked, speaks of the ultimate purpose; so we may read the first line in the same way: every man is made of the Lord for a final purpose; none of us is here in the world without such a divinely set purpose. — That this purpose is identical for all men the second line shows us: **yea, even the wicked for the day of evil**. That implies that the godly are made for the final, glorious day of deliverance. There is no thought of an absolute predestination or of determinism here. Quite the contrary. This *mashal* deals, not with the *voluntas antecedens*, but with the *voluntas*

consequens. It voices in its own way the word of Jesus: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned. This is the will of the Lord which takes into account the final effect and result of his saving grace in the hearts and lives of men. His antecedent will considers only his purpose of grace, apart from anything in man save man's lost condition and utter need of saving grace. So this antecedent will would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim 2, 4; and as far as this purpose and will of God is concerned all men would be saved. But some men absolutely refuse to be saved, and wickedly and wilfully, of set purpose, reject all saving grace. These are **the wicked** mentioned in this mashal. The result is that the purpose of the Lord's antecedent will is attained only in some men, they who by his grace become godly, turn to faith and remain in faith. So the subsequent will of the Lord deals with these men as believers faithful unto the end. Now, already in the creation of these men this subsequent will or purpose of the Lord was before him. He made them for "the purpose set by him," that is the purpose of his grace crowning them in the day of deliverance with eternal blessedness. If we care to, we may reckon in all preceding purposes of the Lord leading to this consummation. But there is "the wicked" man, *ra'ah*, unbelieving, godless, obdurate to the end, by his resistance frustrating the antecedent will of grace. Well, the Lord in his antecedent will never intended him to be such a man and to end as such a man. But since he counts himself unworthy of salvation, Acts 13, 46, and will not let the Lord gather him as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, Matth. 23, 37, the Lord deals with him accordingly, and he does so from the start: he has made "even the wicked for the day of evil," i. e. for the final day of terrible judgment. All the Scriptures testify that the Lord's purpose, expressed in his

subsequent will, is that this man shall be damned at last. In other words, even the wicked must serve the Lord's purpose. Since they will not glorify his grace, they must glorify his justice.

The fourth mashal has spoken of "the wicked," but has mentioned him only by that term. The fifth mashal goes a step farther, and explains his wickedness and justifies his final punishment: **Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord;** indeed, "an abomination of the Lord" is first in the sentence and thus emphatic, *ein Scheusal*, using the strongest possible term. "The proud in heart" is not merely one of the worst of "the wicked," as has been supposed, but is a synonym for "the wicked." It defines and elucidates. Pride is the essence of sin, lifting itself up above the Lord's will and command; and especially also the essence of unbelief. No wonder "the wicked" is set for "the day of evil." — *Though hand join in hand* is an effort to render the Hebrew *yad l'yad*, literally: "hand to hand." The English sounds as if one hand joins another to frustrate this man's punishment: as though men combine and join hands against the Lord's judgment on this man. But the Hebrew is a solemn assurance, like that of Jesus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you!" In English we might render it: "shake hands on it," German: *die Hand drauf*. **He shall not be unpunished** means that the Lord's purpose to bring him to the day of evil shall not be frustrated. *Yinnaqeh*, the niphal from *naqah*, "to be clean," means: "he shall not be acquitted" and thus left unpunished. The day of reckoning may indeed be delayed, but it shall surely arrive in the end.

The last two meshalim dealt with the wicked and his doom. He is headed for the evil day when his punishment shall overtake him. But while he remains in this life a man may be delivered from his wickedness, depart from evil, and thus be saved at last. So the sixth mashal begins: **By mercy and truth in-**

iquity is purged. By whose mercy? and whose truth? Delitzsch is followed by Daechsel and Boehmer in answering: by man's mercy and truth toward his neighbor. The result is the boldest and baldest work-righteousness and self-atonement. Boehmer puts its blankly thus: "He who is heartily pious by that atones for his sins, purges them before God, makes them as if they had not been committed, and protects himself against the punishment that otherwise would follow." These words make us shudder. They contradict the entire Bible on atonement, expiation, and justification. Delitzsch knows the Bible doctrine on justification a little better, for he acknowledges that *fides qua justificat* (faith in so far as it justifies) is without works, though *fides quæ justificat* (the faith which justifies) is not without works, i. e. as fruits that follow. But in the face of this acknowledgment, by devious manipulations, he after all comes to this plainly false conclusion: "that the love which covers our neighbor's sins, Prov. 10, 12, has an effect that reaches back and covers and expiates our own sins." Then he quotes: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," as if Christ taught the false doctrine he has just uttered. He also perpetrates things like this: "We cannot expect of the Old Testament that it should distinguish with Pauline sharpness everywhere what even James could not and would separate in thought," thus brazenly slandering both the Old Testament and St. James in one breath. Delitzsch is given to such rubber exegesis, as if in places the inspired Word were caoutchouc and could be stretched *ad libitum*. Paul does distinguish sharply when in the matter of justification he absolutely excludes all human works whether done before or done after God's judicial acquitting verdict; but in doing so Paul uses the Old Testament and shows to the Jews that the whole Old Testament does exactly the same thing. And James agrees perfectly with Paul. Both

teach that in the justifying act no human works are counted in as meritorious, but after the justifying act faith must show by works that it is true faith and not dead. Paul emphasizes, as does the whole Bible and in particular also the whole Old Testament, that all law-works are barred out in justification; and James emphasizes that abundant Gospel-works follow after justification. And not even Delitzsch shall muddle up the clear and true teaching of these two Apostles. The God who inspired both Testaments speaks with the same clearness in both on the central doctrine of salvation, atonement and justification. To preach and teach that man's mercy and truth towards either man or God atones for even a single one of his sins, is to strike a dagger into the very heart of saving truth. On this point none of us can speak too emphatically. Norton in the Expositor's Bible follows blindly in the same wrong track, when he writes: "Where God sees mercy and truth he will purge iniquity." — Hofmann tries an impossible thing when he reads the two *b^e* (*by* mercy and truth, and *by* the fear of the Lord) as indicating place, namely *where* expiation, and *where* avoidance of evil is found. — The solid exegetical rule holds here as in every other case: any exegetical finding which clashes with the Analogy of Faith is *eo ipse* false, and must be cast aside. And this is one rule that has no exceptions, just as truth is true without exception. — The exegetical answer to the question, whose mercy and truth this is, is by no means decided by the fact that in a few places in Scripture "mercy and truth" are used also of godly men. These two, "mercy and truth" are used more often of God. Therefore, looking only at these two terms, the answer might be in doubt, but with the great probability that God's mercy and truth are meant here. We strike solid ground the moment we look at the next words: **iniquity is purged.** Never is iniquity purged by man's mercy and truth, but only by the Lord's mercy

and truth. This is the true answer. — The two *b^e* in no way make this answer doubtful. The notion, that since the second *b^e* refers to the fear in man's heart, therefore the first *b^e* must also refer to mercy and truth in man's heart, is a notion, and nothing more. There is no grammatical, rhetorical, or exegetical rule that two *b^e* in two consecutive clauses must be identical even to the point of implication. Note that the two clauses are not identical in their verbs, and verbs are far weightier than prepositions. The first verb is passive, *y^ekuphphar*, from *kaphar*, "to cover," hence: "is covered," and thus "purged," in the sense that it is made non-existent; while the second verb is active, *sur*, men "depart." Now behind the passive there is always an agent. "Iniquity is purged" — who is it that does this purging? At once we get the answer *God*. Now if by mercy and truth *God* purges iniquity, how can any one claim that this mercy and truth is not *God's*, but *man's*? So our answer is absolutely sound exegetically: The Lord by his (the Lord's) mercy and truth purges a man's iniquity. If anything more were needed, the second clause furnishes it; for just as the first clause implies the person who does the purging, so the second clause implies the persons who "depart" — in both clauses the presumption is that any intelligent reader will without difficulty supply the two omissions.

Chesed, **mercy**, should be translated "grace," as it is the *favor Dei* extended toward the wicked who are utterly unworthy. Recall the further explanations in previous texts. By grace alone are our sins covered and thus removed from sight for ever. — '*Emeth* is **truth**, reliability. The two are a pair, see John 1, 17. Grace is the fulness of the divine favor, truth the fulness of the divine revelation. For us both are objective, first as existing in God (his attributes), and secondly as producing all manner of saving effects. Moreover, they are twined together: grace is pro-

claimed to us by truth, and truth is the revelation grace has made. Every gospel promise is as to its quality grace, and as to its reliability truth. — The remark that **iniquity**, '*avon*', a strong term for sin as opposition and insult to God, refers to past sins, while "evil" in the second clause refers to possible future sins, is superficial and misleading. We expect daily to come to the throne of grace and truth; and every past sin and fault is a warning to us to turn from them. — As the first Hebrew line deals with justification, so the second deals with sanctification. **The fear of the LORD** is the sum and substance of true godliness. It is holy reverence for the covenant Lord, growing out of faith and love, and manifesting itself negatively in this that we **depart from evil**, shun it, flee from it, and hate it, because an insult to the Lord whom we reverence; and positively in running the way of his commandments, doing all that pleases and delights him. The notion that "the fear of the Lord" is an Old Testament concept on a lower basis than the New Testament, a kind of dread of the Lord, producing a godly life of negative type, always fearful of doing wrong, while in the New Testament we are moved by love, and thus attain a positive godliness that cheerfully does what is right, this notion is one of those derogations of the Old Testament which ought finally to cease. Fear, love, and trust stand equally for both covenants. St. Paul feared the Lord as much as Moses did. Luther coupled fear and love in the explanation of every commandment in the Catechism for Christians. Fear is to keep us from evil to-day, just as it did Joseph in Potiphar's house. But the right fear or reverence moved and still moves godly men also to the works that please the Lord. Love dreads to displease, just as much as it compels to please.

The seventh *masal* presumes what the sixth contains, namely that a man is purged from his sin and in the Lord's fear shuns evil. Of such a man this new

mashal says: **When a man's ways please the LORD, etc.** The Hebrew has *b^e* with the infinitive from *ratsah*, which the English cannot imitate. The singular "way," *derek*, is used of a man's whole conduct; the plural here has the same meaning. The Lord is pleased with our ways when as his children we walk in his fear. — Then one of the good things with which the Lord in his generous grace at times rewards such a man is that he **maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.** This statement is an application of what the third and fourth meshalim contain, namely that the Lord governs all things and has his purpose in them all. So he controls even our enemies, whoever they may be and whatever the reason for their hostility. The Lord can so shape events and so control men's hearts that they will cease hostile efforts and settle down to friendly peace. *Yashlim*, the hiphil from *shalam*, means "to bring into harmony with." A case in point is Acts 2, 47, the first church in Jerusalem, "having favor with all the people," Acts 4, 33: "and great grace was upon them all." This case is instructive, for soon it was followed by the great persecution which scattered the numerous flock of Christians in all directions. When we suffer persecution for our confession of the Lord, this, too, only in a different way, is a mark of the Lord's undeserved favor, Matth. 5, 10-12. In applying this mashal to ourselves we should not expect to have our enemies always made kind to us, but when they do cease injuring us and turn peaceful we should thank the Lord for this manifestation of his favor.

The eighth mashal is a kind of synonym to the seventh in that it also speaks of a blessing for the godly man. The seventh dealt with the godly man's relation to other men, the eighth with his relation to earthly property. **Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.** Often the godly man is poor, and may be inclined to grieve on

that account or to envy the ungodly rich. In this mashal the underlying idea is that when the godly man is left poor, this is the Lord's doing. But such poverty is far better than all the wealth of the rich ungodly. "A little with righteousness" may mean: gotten in a righteous way; although the words read as if a double possession is meant, first "a little," namely earthly goods and money, secondly, added to that and combined with it, "righteousness." *Ts^edaqah*, we must remember, always carries with it the idea of a verdict rendered by a judge according to a certain norm of right; here by the Lord as the judge. So the real treasure of a poor godly man is partly material, and for the greater part immaterial or spiritual. — Now the ungodly man may be very rich and have **great revenues**, lit. "a multitude of incomes," so that he is pictured as not only rich, but as constantly growing richer by the stream of incomes which roll into his coffers. But as long as all this growing wealth is **without right**, it is only so much evidence in the Lord's court testifying against him to condemn him. "Right," *mishphat*, is right as the result of judicial verdicts and legal proceedings, by which certain norms are established and thus cases of "right" and of "wrong." And here again the phrase need not mean merely ill-gotten revenues, but such material revenues minus the immaterial possession of "right." If that be absent, even in the *mishphat* that men render in their judging, the greatest wealth is but a poor possession. So this mashal, like 1 Tim. 6, 6, is a great comfort for all the godly who are left poor in this life.

The ninth mashal links back into the first, so that really the whole nine are like a string of jewels with the ends tied together. **A man's heart deviseth his way**, *y^echashsheb*, the piel of *chashab* (compare the last Hebrew word in v. 3: "calculations"), means that man does the calculating in regard to his course of action. In v. 1 we had the planning. But the trouble

with this calculating is that so many factors in our problems escape us and others we do not estimate correctly. Take a criminal — he miscalculates in some one point perhaps, and instead of escaping is caught, perhaps to his own surprise. But the thing is true also of the godly man whom Solomon here had in mind. He calculates, and yet often things turn out differently than he expects, often enough far better than he has any right to expect. — **But the LORD directeth his steps**, puts the contrast on the verbs as well as the subjects, here *yakin*, the hiphil from *kun*: “he determines.” We may show the beauty of the *marshal* by printing the corresponding terms together:

A man's heart	calculates	his way
The Lord	determines	his steps

Note that “way” goes with the idea of mental calculation; and “steps” with the idea of action in carrying out the calculation. When the time of action comes we often do what we did not at first calculate. So the Lord shapes our course. And for the godly his disposing is always best. This *marshal* has become current in the popular proverb: **Man proposes, God disposes**; *der Mensch denkt, Gott lenkt*; *homo proponit, Deus disponit*.

SUGGESTIONS

As fine as this text is, so great is the dearth of good outlines on it. There is scarcely one that we care to quote. Look at Boehmer's main one, developed even into a complete sermon: “What genuine pioussness is: 1) Its nature; 2) Its value.” Koegel is somewhat better: “All with God, then All is Well: Commit to the Lord: 1) Thy heart; 2) Thy word; 3) Thy work; 4) Thy ways; 5) Thy walk.” He has caught the idea of the text, but whoever tries to use his division will certainly find that the parts lie too close together to make each one distinct. Who can make three parts like “work,” “ways,” and “walk” stand out properly and not run together? Schoener makes the

division easier to work out: "Everything With, and Nothing Without the Lord: 1) In our thoughts and words; 2) In our ways and works." Yet even this division runs too shallow, and thus lacks weight. In both Koegel's and Schoener's outline the respective theme itself is not divided at all, i. e., its actual substance. The parts that are appended to each theme are in reality only a formal grouping, which is tied to the theme as a substitute for real division. So we are again left to our own resources.

The general trend and underlying thought in these nine proverbs is quite evident: man himself and everything about him depends on the Lord. We may say, then, that the subject of the text is: *Our complete dependence on the Lord*. There is a tone of admonition, however, which also comes out directly in v. 3: "Commit thy works unto the Lord," thus urging us *against all false independence*. We judge that this is the real purpose in the choice of this text for the present Sunday. Placed between a text on false prophets and one on unbelief, this Proverb text indicates a third danger to which the Godly Life is subject, namely, false independence. With this general purpose of the text to guide us we may consider casting a theme and forming a division. And it ought to be plain that the theme may be positive in form, just as well as negative, either form being good. For in the sermon one will naturally show that the right dependence on the Lord shuts out the false independence, and vice versa false independence is overcome only when we attain true dependence. — Moreover, the scope of the text should be noted. It is broader than some think. V. 6 reaches back to the very beginnings of our Godly Life, and v. 4-5 reach out to the final day of judgment. A proper view of these three central verses, 4-6, will incline us to abandon the analytic idea for the outline and to prefer the synthetic; which means that we lay out in due order the thought material presented in our text, and then proceed to recombine this material according to a governing thought of our own. In other words, we restring these pearls when we present them in the sermon. — So we may start with the basic thoughts, and say in the introduction: Besides the danger of false and misleading teaching that tries to assail us from without, there is a second danger that usually begins right within our own hearts. Instead of recognizing our complete dependence upon the Lord, our wayward and foolish hearts at times attempt to be independent of him. We may forget him, disregard him, try to attain our purposes without him, even proudly contradict him and his Word, or wickedly disobey him. But it is always

folly to start on such independence. Even when we seem to succeed with it, in reality we fail utterly. For the Lord's mighty hand is even over the wicked, whom he has set for the day of evil, or final reckoning. In some cases complete dependence on the Lord seems to bring us great loss. But in the end this dependence is always full of the greatest blessings, and even as we pass on from station to station in the Godly Life these blessings are encountered in signal ways.— Learn then this great secret in the Godly Life to

Commit Thyself Wholly Unto the Lord.

- I. *To his mercy and truth*, which alone are able to purge us from sin, and the pride of ungodliness, v. 6 and 5.
- II. *To his judgment*, which alone is able to weigh our spirits, and make our ways clean, v. 2.
- III. *To his guidance*, which alone is able to direct our steps upright, v. 9, and bring us to the right goal, v. 1 and 3-4.
- IV. *To his beneficence*, which alone is able to heap us with blessings, v. 7-8.

An outline like this elucidates what committing oneself to the Lord really means, and is thus a true division of the theme. Often commands like this: "Commit thyself," etc., are divided by stating the pertinent reasons for obeying the injunction. The theme then, however, really is: "Why commit thyself," etc. It is illogical to divide: "Commit thyself," etc.: 1) What does it mean thus to commit thyself; 2) Why thou shouldst do this. Such division shows a hiatus in the thinking.—The theme we have used may be varied in different ways. For instance: "The Blessedness of Committing Thyself to the Lord"; divide by drawing the main features of this blessedness from the text and set over against each one the evil results of living independently of the Lord. Or use v. 9: "Let the Lord Direct Thy Steps," in escaping from sin, in judging our ways, in striving for happiness.—

The danger of false independence may be made vivid to hearers by painting a picture of the independent man, drawing the pigments from the text, and not forgetting to offset properly all the negative features by strongly contrasting positive counterparts.

The Man Who Thinks He is Independent.

There is something woefully wrong with him:

- I. *With his heart.* A heart that is independent of the Lord's mercy and truth sticks fast in unpurged guilt, and heads for an evil day, v. 5 and 4; and when that day comes even the sham of his independence will be shattered.— Add the counterpart.
- II. *With his brain.* Does he think because he can make plans and calculations, he can control his steps and the goal or outcome? Or that such pride will go unpunished? Verses 1, 9, 5.— Contrast with the dependent man, his good sense, and safe ways of thinking, v. 3, etc.
- III. *With his life.* He may have many friends, great revenues, seem clean in his own eyes, v. 7-8 and 2, but every life like this ends in disaster, v. 2b, 4b, 6 turned negatively.— Sketch the dependent life, even the poorest as to earthly appearance, and what this life attains here and hereafter.

Here again the theme may be varied, with corresponding changes in the parts. For instance one may use v. 5: "The Man Who is Proud in His Heart," for this pride is the inwardness of false independence. 1) Couple the manifestations of this pride with the deceptive attainments in this life, and the disillusion that is bound to set in, and contrast the whole with the humble dependence of true godliness. 2) Begin with the pride that adjudges a man clean when he is full of guilt; that scorns mercy and truth when nothing else can cleanse him; that rejects the fear of the Lord, and thus never gets out of evil, even when he achieves outward respectability. How much better the humble heart, etc. 3) Follow up with the pride that is wise in its own plannings and calculations, in the delusion of getting a great deal of earthly wealth, joy, and honor, etc.; and then paint the contrast to all this.— Another theme lies in v. 7: "When a Man's Ways Please the Lord," which, of course, is positive.— Keep the sermon deep enough by laying chief stress on grace and truth and the fear of the Lord, on his judgment and pleasure with us. Never neglect grace for providence, or justification for sanctification.

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Jer. 7, 1-11

On the prophet Jeremiah, his mission, and his book, as far as these need to be considered by the preacher using the present text, review the pertinent introductory remarks on the texts for The First Sunday in Advent, Septuagesima, and Oculi. Our text forms the opening portion of Jeremiah's so-called Temple Address, chapters 7-10. We agree with the finding that this address is not identical either in occasion or in contents with the address "in the reign of Jehoiakim" in chapter 23. — The Tenth Sunday after Trinity is always connected with the destruction of Jerusalem, which also means that this Sunday marks a division point in the after-Trinity series. Our text is chosen accordingly, for in v. 3 and 7 the pointed statement occurs: "I will cause you to dwell in this place" only under certain conditions, with the plain implication that if Judah goes on in its evil course and continues to make the Lords house "a den of robbers," v. 11, Jerusalem shall be destroyed, the Temple made a waste like Shiloh, v. 11, and Judah deported like the northern kingdom Israel. Our text is a close parallel to the old gospel text, Luke 19, 41-48, even to the point that Jesus called the Temple "a den of thieves," and in his case as well as in Jeremiah's all the warning words fell on obdurate hearts and unbelieving ears. Jeremiah, however, had before him the original Temple of Solomon, and Jesus the second or Herodian Temple. Both destructions stand out in history not only as terrific judgments of the Lord, but also as types and prophecies of the final judgment on the last day. Many sins are charged by Jeremiah

against Judah in this great Temple Address, but the base and pinnacle of them all is unbelief, so that our text, like the one from Luke, is in sum and substance *a mighty warning against unbelief*. This is the real inwardness of all sin, a thing we should ever note. We to-day preach to an audience different from the one Jeremiah, and afterwards Jesus, faced. Our congregations are addressed as believers, not as recreant unbelievers. That makes some difference, yet not that our text has no application for those in the Godly Life. What was written aforetime was written for our warning, lest there grow up in us also a bitter root of unbelief. Some, like Demas, fall away from our congregations, love the world again, turn like the dog to his vomit, and end in unbelief. Doubt and denial of parts of God's Word, and various forms of sin still assail the membership in our churches. So the warning of ancient Judah and Jerusalem is very much in place. Six of the seven churches in Asia Minor, to whom St. John was commissioned to write brief and pointed letters were warned that the Lord would remove their candlesticks unless they repented and put away the evil in their midst. Those churches were indeed finally obliterated. Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall!

1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying. 2. Stand in the gate of the LORD'S house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter into these gates to worship the LORD.

This is Jeremiah's commission. Just how it **came to Jeremiah from the Lord** we are not told, for the fact that it came is the thing conveyed to us, not the way of the coming. It came, however, in the directest way, as one person speaks to another, and this the prophet set down for his readers. We have here beyond question what must be termed Verbal

Inspiration. That includes both the original communication to Jeremiah and his record of it in writing, for both are identical in substance and expression. The notion that this Temple Address is a combination of several addresses in abbreviated form is without the slightest foundation, for what lies before us is plainly a unit in thought and form, and is even introduced as such by the Lord himself. That again and again the statement recurs: "Thus saith the Lord," is for emphasis, the more deeply to impress the individual sections of the Address. The dramatic parts where the prophet himself expresses his feelings in combination with the Lord's indictments, etc., are the effects of the revelations of the Lord upon the prophet himself, and it is the Lord who prompts these expressions of feelings and controls their form in detail to accord with that he means to convey to Judah. For Verbal Inspiration is never a dead, mechanical, wooden reproduction of certain words and syllables heard, but the Lord's perfect control of all the faculties, emotions, and expressions of his chosen human instruments when he uses them to speak or write what he desires, in the way he desires. In this pneumatic use of chosen men and their minds and hearts there is wide latitude and freedom, but with it all the most perfect control, so that never a false note is struck, a faulty term employed, an inadequate idea expressed. He who created and sanctified these men and their faculties used them as a master player uses the instrument of his choice, to use a poor human comparison for something that lies on the very highest plane, away above even our most exceptional ordinary experiences. — Jeremiah's commission tells him where to deliver this address: **Stand in the gate of the LORD'S house.** There were three inner gates, one into the court of the women, one into the court of the men, and a third into the court of the priests. Since all the people of Judah were to hear Jeremiah's words

we conclude that the prophet was to stand at the first of these gates facing the crowds in the great outer court as they prepared to enter the inner courts for worship. The multitude was to be held here, crowding close, till the address was delivered. — It starts with a preamble: **Hear the word of the LORD**, by this call and announcement holding them at the entrance. Jeremiah is not speaking his own word, he is functioning solely as Yahveh's mouthpiece. Where he adds, as in 9, 1 etc., the expression of his own feelings, this merely in another way, namely as a reflex of the Lord's words, expresses the power of what the Lord communicates. Thus Jeremiah functions in the highest sense as the Lord's prophet. — The persons addressed are **all ye of Judah**. While the surmise seems correct that the occasion when Jeremiah spoke was one of the great Jewish festivals for which the people generally came to the Temple, the prophet standing in the portal could not with his voice actually reach even all the worshippers who attended that one festival. So we must conclude that the Address was made as publicly as possible, but with the idea that all who actually heard it were to report it far and wide to all the rest. — The qualification is added: **all ye that enter in at these gates** (the three mentioned above) **to worship the LORD**, the hithpalel of *shachah*. The formal worship of the Lord was in progress, just as it was in the days of Jesus, but compare v. 21 etc. for its quality. These people actually thought that having the Temple and keeping up its ritual, the Lord would have to be satisfied.

3. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel. Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. 4. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are these. 5. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways

and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; 6. If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: 7. Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

The Address proper begins with the solemn assurance that the people are hearing the Lord himself, Jeremiah acting only as his mouthpiece. It is *Yahveh*, their covenant LORD, who, however, owns and commands the **hosts** of heaven, all its armies to do his will. While "the Lord of hosts" already implies that he employs these hosts in the interest of his covenant, this is put beyond all doubt by the addition: **the God of Israel**, which is like "our God": he whose might as God is exercised in Israel's favor. Both names really contain appeal as well as warning. — The substance of the Lord's word to all Judah is stated at once in the form of a command coupled with a promise. The command is: **Amend your ways and your doings**, *hetibu*, the hiphil from *yatab*: "make good" in the sight and judgment of your Lord. The idea is not merely to amend or make better than at present, but to amend completely so as to obtain the Lord's verdict: Good! What this amendment is to include, and how it is to be effected the address shows farther on; here only the summary demand is voiced. Note, however, that the Lord is dealing with "Israel" (here Judah), to whom he had given all his old covenant grace. So, not by Judah's own efforts this amendment was to be made, but by the Lord's grace which Judah had neglected. — **Ways and doings** are practically the same, although the plural "ways" is at times used like the singular "way" for the general course of life; whereas *ma'allalim* are the individual actions making up and characterizing the way or

course. — The note of grace is in the promise: **and I will cause you to dwell in this place**, namely Jerusalem, the center of the land of Judah. This promise involves more than a superficial reader grasps. It includes the divine approval and favor in accord with the covenant, and thus the resulting covenant blessing. Thus to dwell “in this place” meant the continuance of the nation, the protection of its land, the safety of Jerusalem and the Temple, the acceptance of Judah’s worship, and the undisturbed continuation of the Lord’s plan of redemption through Judah. A vast blessing indeed. But the very form of this promise, conditioned on amendment, involves the corresponding negative warning, we may even say threat. Judah shall not and cannot go on dwelling in this place if it refuses to amend. In the case of non-amendment every item in this extensive promise shall be reversed into its opposite. The Temple shall be torn down and Jerusalem destroyed, with all that this means. Actually this came to pass when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and carried the inhabitants away into Babylon. The Lord’s promise was in vain.

What was the trouble with Judah? Sin and wickedness, of course; but back of these unbelief, namely in this form, that instead of trusting in the real grace and promise of the Lord, Judah trusted in the delusive assurances of false prophets. Unbelief may reject all faith, even denying the very existence of God; again unbelief may reject the true Word of the Lord and substitute for it some human word or wisdom, dreaming that this is what the Lord really said. The latter was the case with Judah. So the Lord calls to her: **Trust ye not in the lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.** *Batach* is here contrued with *'el*, while in v. 8 it has *'al*; the former may be rendered: “to rely upon,” the latter “to trust in,” the sense being practically the same,

This is unbelief, namely to withdraw trust and reliance from the Lord's actual Word, and to put confidence in the lying words put forth by men. — Here these lying words are quoted in terse form. *Sheqer* is "lie" in the sense of unreality, also "deception" when this unreality as here is palmed off as the reality: "words that are deception." The threefold repetition: **The temple of the LORD**, indicates the vigor and emphasis with which this *sheqer* was put forth, and at the same time the complete assurance with which it was received and believed. The subject is *hemmah*, literally: "they," masculine, but as in this case meant of the neuter, the Latin *ea*. The plural is idiomatic, for the more usual singular of the English: "This (is) the temple of the LORD." The idea in the statement is: Jerusalem cannot possibly be destroyed, since it has the Temple, sanctified by the Lord's presence and Name, the sanctuary which for his own honor he cannot possibly abandon to the Gentiles. Having this Temple, the lying prophets told Judah, they possessed the absolute guarantee for the possession of their land and the continuance of their nation (Keil). The northern kingdom, Israel, did indeed fall, but it had not the Temple. These prophets believed in the inviolability and indestructibility of the Temple, in spite of all the Lord's warnings. They forgot two things: first, that the Temple did not guarantee the Lord's presence, but the Lord's presence the Temple; secondly, that Judah herself had already violated the Temple. Micah 3, 11 is to the same effect: "Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us." The infatuation of the Jews for their Temple in the time of Jesus was of the same type; hence the *mashal* of Jesus: "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up," John 2, 19; see *The New Gospel Selections* by the author, p. 344 etc. Unbelief often clings to outward organization and forms as assuring salvation, when spiritual substance and life have departed. Church

connection, church organization, certain forms of worship, use of holy names, etc., are types of this unreality and unbelief now, held by many in place of the living Word. The greater men's faith in these, the greater is their actual unbelief in the latter.

Over against the lying words of the false prophets and the mistaken trust they beget, the Lord puts his true words, in order to beget a trust that is justified. **For** is incorrect; *ki*, or *ki 'im*, after a negative statement means: "on the contrary," the strong adversative introducing the corresponding positive statement. The sum of verses five and six we have in the Baptist's demand: "Bring forth therefore works meet for repentance," Matth. 3, 8. The Baptist also specifies some of the works, Luke 3, 10 etc., just as the Lord does in our text. — First the summary requirement is repeated: **if you thoroughly amend your ways and doings**; but here the infinitive absolute is added to the verb in order to intensify its meaning: "thoroughly or decidedly amend." Then the specifications follow, the first of which also has the intensifying inf. abs.: **if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor**. This and the following three amendments should not be read as mere incidental acts pertaining only to certain individuals in Judah. Note that "all ye of Judah" are addressed; and that the amending specified involves the retainment of the whole land by the nation, and the continuance of the evils referred to signifies the ejection of the nation from its land. So, while executing right judgment between man and man refers to individual court cases, great and small, the sense is that the whole nation is to be filled with such a sense of justice that no unjust judges will be tolerated. The fear and love of the Lord is to bear as its fruit the constant thought in the dealings of one man with another: What is right in the sight of the Lord? The amendment required is more than a legal or social reform, it is no

less than a religious renewal of the people generally, putting a right conscience in place of selfish personal gain and influence, cunning and shrewdness, and all the tricks of injustice and dishonesty, which when they most succeed, most help to dig their own grave, as A. Pfeiffer puts it.

First, justice springing from the fear of the Lord, secondly, mercy: *if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow*, with the personal objects put forward for emphasis, thus emphasizing also the verb by placing it last. Widows, orphans, and strangers are thus often named together and put under the special care of the Lord. They are the chief among the general class of the helpless, and thus first to suffer where cruel greed and unscrupulous selfishness dominate. Nor are laws sufficient for their protection. There must be mercy flowing from the love of the Lord. While the negative is used: "oppress not," it is in the sense that oppression is to yield to kindness and help: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world," James 1, 27. — To understand the third specification: **and shed not innocent blood in this place**, we must note the new negative and the addition "in this place." The two previous *lo'*, are to be understood as when we say: it is not; while *'al* is subjective, as when we say: may it not be. So the latter is stronger, intimating the horror connected with shedding innocent blood. All the people of Judah are warned, for if in their midst innocent blood is shed, this will defile "this place," Jerusalem, even the Temple itself, as also the whole land, by bringing blood-guilt upon the nation. Think of the killing of Jesus, whose blood came upon the Jews and is still upon them, Matth. 27, 25; also the blood of James, Stephen, and other martyrs. There is a notable gradation from property between a man and his neighbor,

to poor living persons such as widows etc., and then to the taking of life in shedding innocent blood.— The climax is reached in the fourth item, which rises from men to God himself: **neither walk after other gods to your hurt**, “unto evil unto yourselves.” To walk after other gods, idols, is to trust them and let them control and guide our lives. The phrase “to your hurt” cannot be construed with all the prohibitions; it belongs only to the last. Only *ra'*, here the neuter for evil or injury, means far more than merely some incidental damage which idolatry may bring to the people. What damage is involved here has been plainly intimated, namely Judah's rejection by the Lord and ejection from its land. The idolatry meant is directly mentioned in v. 9.— And now the promise so significantly combined with the admonition in v. 3 is repeated in amplified form: **Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.** There is no idea here of a bargain, like work-righteousness, law-works, human merit traded in for the Lord's favor. The giving of the land to the fathers was an act of divine grace. But it was more than an individual gift, though a great one; it was part of the covenant of grace with the fathers. This land was given as the Lord's home for his covenant people. Yet it was so given not merely as a home where they might dwell in safety and plenty. They were to live here so that the Lord might accomplish the purpose for which he had made his covenant and in that covenant given this land, namely the great purpose of preparing through this people his world-wide salvation. The question at issue now was, whether Judah intended to abide by that covenant of the fathers, or not. They had practically fallen away from it. Would they now at the last moment return? The Lord is holding out to Judah his old covenant grace and promise in order to win them again to accept and retain that grace.

Part of the original stipulation of that covenant was that they should be true to the Lord, and if they should become recreant, that then the Lord should withdraw his grace and gift. The Lord was now acting on this stipulation. — With Judah remaining true the Lord's favor would continue indefinitely, also this part of his grace that they should have this land **for ever and ever**. The connection decides just what '*olam* means, namely "eternity," or an indefinite length of time. Here: "from '*olam* and unto '*olam*" carries the latter meaning. The modifier belongs to the main clause. By returning to the Lord's covenant Judah would not only have escaped the Babylonian deportation, but would have kept its land, remaining faithful, to this day.

8. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. 9. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; 10. And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? 11. Is this house which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.

The admonition: "Trust not in lying words," was not meant in v. 4 of a mere possibility, but of a grave actuality. The indictment is made with emphasis: **Behold, ye trust in lying word**. The Lord registers the fact; however with the addition of a judgment: **that cannot profit**, lit.: "to non-benefit," *ho'il*, the infinitive from *ya'al*, "to further ascendancy," to benefit or profit. All trusting in words, doctrines, interpretations that are *sheqer*, a lie, ends, to put it mildly, in non-profit. Yet here, too, this negative connotes a positive which has already been indicated, namely the Lord's punishment.

V. 9 brings a catalog of grave sins that affect, not merely individuals in Judah, but through them the entire nation. The very fountain that pours out such a stream of sins is evil and corrupt. The Hebrew construction is striking; for: **Will ye steal, murder, etc.** really has a row of infinitive absolutes, with the interrogative prefix *ha* before the first, so that we may translate: "What?" or: "Is this it?—to steal, to murder, to commit adultery," etc., i. e. is this what ye do, and (v. 10) then come and stand before me in this house? etc. The question is dramatic, voicing the outrage the Lord feels in this treatment. First three crimes against the second table of the law are mentioned, then two against the first table. The breaking of these five, of course, involves the breaking of the other five as well—no need of cataloging all. There is a climax in putting the transgressions against the first table last, since all transgressions against the first table are graver than those against the second. The climax is carried still further when the final sin mentioned is idolatry, against the First Commandment. To swear falsely, "for a lie," is perjury, the abuse of God's name forbidden in the Second Commandment. To burn incense, *qatal*, unto Baal is an act of worship expressing delight in him. Baal is the chief male god of the Canaanites and Phenecians, as Ashtoreth is the chief female god. One of the great abominations of the pre-exile period was this Baal worship. But there were other gods as well, and we have the same expression as in v. 6 b: "to walk after other gods," as trusting them and adhering to them, namely by going and offering them worship in the high places, groves, etc. **Whom ye know not** is added by the Lord as a fact, but as one that condemns this idolatry even from the standpoint of these idolaters. It is like an *argumentum ad hominem*. Yahveh the people of Judah knew, could and should know, for it was he who had brought them forth out of Egypt,

and had furnished countless proofs of his power, grace, goodness, and righteousness. But what had these "other gods" done for Judah? They were dead, lifeless images. One might know their names, the stories invented concerning them, but could never know them by the contact of a single act of power or goodness.

The effect of the interrogative particle at the head of v. 9 is continued on through v. 10, making this an indignant question: **And come and stand before me in this house? etc.**, namely the Temple. The perfect tense indicates *firmam persuasionem incolumitatis*, the firm assurance of security. To indicate the enormity of the act the Lord adds: my house, **which is called by my name**. The clause denotes ownership: the house called by the Lord's name, or "upon which his name is called," is his own house; to desecrate it is to insult the Lord. Yet the expression, though used also of Gentile kings and the cities they claimed for themselves, when used of the Lord as here means more. The Lord's name is his revelation. So the house "where upon my name is called," means: my house where I have revealed myself, and have my revelation proclaimed. The enormity lies secondly in this, that people who openly and outrageously violate the Lord's revelation by acting contrary to it as regards both tables of the law, should come into the place dedicated to that very revelation, and do it with a brazen front. — That is enough; but the outrage goes to a climax in this point: **and say, We are delivered to all these abominations**. The niph'al of *natsal* means "to deliver one's self," or "to be delivered." The idea is, that by going to the Temple and performing the ritual these wicked people have absolutely nothing to fear as far as the Lord is concerned, and can go on doing all these abominations with impunity. *Lema'an* with the infinitive or the imperfect never refers to past acts, but always to the intention or purpose to do new acts; hence: "in order that." The

outrage here described thus goes to the limit in making the Lord an abettor of the abominations which he himself abhors and has forbidden, a God who for the price of perfunctory worship allows and encourages crimes and idolatry. Lying in the name of God can go no farther. And now we see the whole inwardness of the cry: The Temple of the Lord! in v. 4.

In v. 11 the Lord himself voices this conclusion in no uncertain words: **Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?** i. e. is that what you consider it? But "a den of robbers" is forward in the question and thus has the fullest emphasis, literally: "a cave of violent men"; *pharitz* means "rending," tearing, and thus violent. The term is used for all the criminals mentioned in v. 9. With Judah going on in the course it has taken, this question must be answered affirmatively — plainly, they consider the Temple a cave of violent men, a place where they may gather and find shelter after committing their violent deeds. — And the Lord adds: **Behold, even I have seen it**, namely that you consider my Temple such a den. *N^{um} Yahveh*, "declaration of the Lord," translated: **saith the LORD**, a solemn assurance on his part. The result of this seeing of the Lord is stated in the following verses: first, the Lord cannot possibly remain in a place which men have made, and come to look upon, as a den of robbers; he departs. Secondly, however, neither will he let these robbers remain in this den; he will rout them and drive them out.

SUGGESTIONS

In the introduction to the exegetical discussion the things were said that must be noted again as the preacher plans out his sermon: 1) that this text is meant of the destruction of Jerusalem; 2) that the basic cause of both Temple destructions was unbelief; 3) that unbelief includes all false belief, since

false belief like non-belief rejects the only saving truth; 4) that both of these destructions, and notably the second, stand out as miniature pictures of God's final judgment, and thus as great signs and warnings for all men of all time; 5) that we all need these warnings though we now may be earnest believers.— So the preacher may briefly tell the story of the two destructions as the great signs of warning set by the Lord on the pages of sacred as well as secular history. Both were preceded by the most specific and earnest warning. State how Jesus warned and even wept; how Jeremiah was sent to warn right in the Temple gate, and how he, too, wept, ch. 9.

Jeremiah's Warning Before the Temple was Destroyed.

He warns the men of Judah, and us all, against **Unbelief**, that is

- I. Against trusting lies instead of truth.*
- II. Against loving sin instead of amendment.*
- III. Against outraging the Lord instead of honoring him.*
- IV. Against provoking the Lord's judgment instead of clinging to his promise.*

The effect here is to balance the negative side of the text by the positive features in it. The arrangement is synthetic in that the thoughts of the text are rearranged to form a new order fitting the theme. The unity lies in the comprehensive idea of *unbelief*, against which is set true faith. Each part, as will be noted, has two main sub-parts.—

The worst feature of unbelief is that it is unbelieving in regard to the results of unbelief. All history is full of the destruction wrought by unbelief. There are countless minor instances, and towering above them the major ones, such as the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Destruction of Solomon's Temple, and the Destruction of Herod's Temple. If anything in the whole world is certain, it is this that unbelief ends absolutely in judgment. And yet just as unbelief refuses to believe other realities, so also it laughs at this.— Our text exposes this unbelief once more. The doom of judgment was even then fast descending upon the kingdom of Judah, its capital city Jerusalem, and the most wonderful Temple of Solomon; yet the very people who were bringing on this doom, when warned by the Lord himself, refused to believe it, till, too late, the catastrophe had overtaken them. Are we fully convinced that unbelief is always deadly? that faith alone saves and wins the Lord's blessing? Then look at

Unbelief As It Really Is.

Jeremiah describes it to us at the Lord's own command.

- I. *It spurns the Lord's promise* — whereas that promise alone is our help (faith).
- II. *It scorns the Lord's commandments* — whereas amendment alone insures blessing (fruits of faith).
- III. *It dares the Lord's judgment* — whereas the fear of that judgment alone saves (the end of faith, 1 Pet. 1, 9).

An outline like that of G. Mayer is too negative, and would demand all the positive part to be taken care of in the elaboration. He suggests: "The Curse of Dead Churchliness: 1) Self-deception; 2) Abomination; 3) Offense." — Eberlein's outline has a double theme, which always makes two little twin sermons of the parts: "The Lord's Promise and Requirement concerning this Place: 1) The gracious promise: I will dwell with you, and let you dwell in this place; 2) The holy requirement: Amend your lives, and profane not my holy Name." To paste together two parts like this and call the combination a theme, is a pretense. For a theme is a unit, not a duality. Pretenses have no place in the pulpit.

The striking expression "a den of robbers" invites use in a theme. Perhaps one like this may answer:

When Solomon's Glorious Temple Became a Den of Robbers:

- I. *Then they who were robbing the Lord* (of faith, obedience, true worship),
- II. *And thought they could do so with impunity* (trusting to the possession of the Temple building; thinking that building delivered them),
- III. *Were told they were robbing themselves* (by their unbelief and wicked life, of all the Lord's promise),
- IV. *And discovered their awful loss too late* (when the Temple was leveled to the ground, Jerusalem made a ruin, and they themselves dragged into exile).

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Dan. 9, 15-18

The following eight texts form the third group or sub-cycle in the after-Trinity series. We have had first, the vital features of the Godly Life; and secondly, the chief dangers for the Godly Life; and now we have *the Main Characteristics of the Godly Life*, namely the traits which naturally go with it and always embellish and mark it, and at the same time show its healthy development. The eight traits registered in the new group are the following:

- 1) A penitent heart, Dan. 9, 15-18. — XI p. Trin.
- 2) Open ears and seeing eyes, Is. 29, 19-21. — XII p. Trin.
- 3) Good works, Zech. 7, 4-10. — XIII p. Trin.
- 4) Genuine worship, Ps. 50, 14-23. — XIV p. Trin.
- 5) Absence of care, 1 Kgs. 17, 8-16. — XV p. Trin.
- 6) Help and blessing in tribulation, Job 5, 17-26. — XVI p. Trin.
- 7) Humility, Ps. 75, 5-8. — XVII p. Trin.
- 8) Unworldliness, 2 Chron. 1, 7-12. — XVIII p. Trin.

The first half of the book of Daniel, ch. 1-6, consists of history, while the second half, ch. 7-12, consists of visions intended to prepare for the great day of salvation after all the storms of time. Chapter 9 tells its own story. Cyrus had conquered the Chaldeans in the year 539 to 538 B. C., and in 538 made Darius ruler over the Chaldean realm. This made a tremendous change as far as the Jews were concerned

who had languished in exile now about 69 years. The Babylonian world-rule was broken, the 70 years of captivity for the Jews prophesied by Jeremiah were nearly ended. Yet nothing seemed to be happening that looked in any way like the ending of the Jewish exile; they seemed to be no better off than before. This moved the prophet Daniel, who lived among the exiles in Babylon, to examine again most carefully the prophecy of Jeremiah as to the length of the exile determined by the Lord. He found the period to be seventy years. Why then was nothing in preparation under this new ruler Darius looking toward an early release? It seemed to Daniel as if the promise was being delayed because his people had not yet sufficiently been punished for their sins. This caused him earnestly "to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes," v. 3. Daniel's prayer is recorded for us at length, v. 4-19. Our text is part of it. It is remarkable in every way. Note that v. 9 has been embodied in the confession of sin in the Lutheran liturgy for Sunday morning, and that v. 18 b is one of the noteworthy statements regarding divine grace. Daniel's prayer is one of the finest confessions of sin in the entire Bible, exceeding even the confessions of David, which are usually only personal. There is no question as to the significance of our text; it shows us *a truly repentant heart* mirrored in a mighty prayer of genuine repentance. Caspari writes: "Daniel's prayer of repentance, especially as a prayer of repentance for the congregation, has hardly its equal in Holy Scripture, and is the perfect model of such a prayer. It strikes the deepest notes of repentance; the knowledge of sin and the feeling of sinfulness here go to the very bottom. The prophet cannot find words enough to describe the greatness of Israel's sin. He gives all honor to the Lord, and to his people, all members of it without exception, nothing but shame. For answer he builds only on God's

grace and mercy, filled equally with the deepest faith in this as with the knowledge that Israel possesses not the least bit of righteousness. Though himself a sinner, yet it cannot properly be said of Daniel that by his sins he helped to bring the punishment of exile upon his people; nevertheless in his prayer of repentance he does not separate himself from his people, but wholly unites himself with them. By contemplating Israel's great sin it becomes his own, and in his prayer he stands as a representative of his people who in him lie before the face of God and confess their iniquity. Here the strength of his spirit of fellowship, as well as the depth of his knowledge of sin is revealed. He looks at himself as a member in the body of Israel, not as one separated from it and standing alone; and in the light of divine holiness his own sins appear to him so great that he has no advantage over his brethren of which he could boast. This is why he names them not only immediately after his prayer beside Israel's sins, but even names them first when in v. 20 he says: 'And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel.' He combines mightily the sins of his contemporaries and the preceding generations, which he views in their inner connection and in their spiritual unity, since he knows what development of sin extends through that long line, and how the sins of the youngest generation are only the final point in that development." — The part of the prayer which precedes our text is all one extended confession and acknowledgment of sin. V. 15 is a summary of that confession, which is then followed by the most fervent plea for mercy.

15. And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

Daniel has made his full confession, and now winds it up and sums it up in two words: "we have sinned, we have done wickedly." He uses the transitional '*aththah*: **And now**, as much as to say: "In order to conclude the confession." That this confession is made most directly to the Lord himself, and in order to beg of him grace and pardon, we see by the fervent personal address: **O Lord our God, 'Adonay 'Eloheanu.** Daniel does not use *Yahveh* in this connection, but the two designations which mark the rule and the almighty power of God, though, let us not overlook it, with the possessive pronoun "our." which means to say: "Thou who dost exert thy power in our behalf." He is still "our God," though Israel has sinned so grievously against him.—The thought of great power and might is eminently proper because of the addition: **that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand.** Here God's might is stressed. In mentioning the deliverance out of Egypt Daniel means much more than merely one single great benefit granted by God to Israel of which he is now reminded in order to prompt him to show still another benefit. There is indeed a similarity between that former deliverance from bondage and the new deliverance from bondage for which Daniel now pleads. Both are deliverances from bondage, and both require nothing less than **a mighty hand**, omnipotent power. But the deliverance from Egypt was a saving act, a fulfillment of the covenant promise to the patriarchs, a supreme act of mercy and grace for Israel. So the reference to Egypt means to convey to God the praise: thou whose love knows no bounds, whose faithfulness never ends.—But there is a reference also to the other nations: **and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day**, literally: "made thee a name," in the sense of "a renowned name." But "name," *shem*, always refers to the revelation which God makes of himself; here the revelation of his

mighty delivering power which no human power is able to stop. The tremendous signs wrought in Egypt, culminating in the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, were reported all over the world; and Daniel's "as at this day" is actually true to this day, for even now men generally know well this mighty act of God's revelation. Moses himself used the deliverance from Egypt in pleading for Israel; so did Isaiah and Jeremiah, and after Daniel also Nehemiah. The idea is that the Lord God, who by the deliverance from Egypt had spread his name and revelation among the nations of the world, could not now set it all aside and in the eyes of the nations be untrue to himself. There is thus a double appeal in Daniel's form of address, one to God's grace as regards Israel, and one to God's honor as regards the nations. J. Boehmer adds: "That it is this God, on the one hand makes the sins (of Israel) especially grave, on the other hand the prospect of forgiveness greater." — Now with great brevity, but with full weight, the confession is summed up in the two words: *chata'nu, rasha'nu, we have sinned, we have done wickedly*. One feels the abasement in which the two words are uttered. There is no excuse, no extenuation, no addition, not even the copulative *v*, just the bare, dreadful fact, unqualified, confessed as such. It is *the* way to confess. Yet the second term intensifies the first. *Chata'* signifies "to miss the mark," and is the commoner term. God's law sets the mark; to miss it is to sin, and the term is thus negative. All sin bears a negative character. It is to fail where failure is death. *Rasha'* is stronger: "to be wicked," *frevelhaft sein*; or as here: "to do wickedly," referring to acts. The term lays more stress on the base wilfulness of sin, on conscious and intentional disobedience to God. It thus helps to convey the full enormity and terrible gravity of sin.

16. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people *are* become a reproach to all *that are* about us. 17. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. 18. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies.

After the confession of sin comes this appeal for forgiveness. Due to the deep feeling in the appeal it begins with the repetition of the address: **O Lord.** Daniel is reaching out for the Lord's heart. What his soul longs to obtain from the Lord is **according to all thy righteousness**, in line and harmony with all the many righteous acts of the Lord in the past, beginning with those that shine so gloriously in the deliverance from Egypt. The plural *ts^edaqoth* signifies manifestations of righteousness, especially in saving acts. These are here called, not acts of grace or mercy, but acts full of righteousness, done according to a norm of right. The norm here meant, however, is that of his covenant; hence: acts that were right for the Lord to do as the Lord of his chosen people. Of course, he himself alone determines what is thus right for him to do. To be sure, these acts were also gracious, merciful, kind, saving; yet in *ts^edaqoth* this is not the point brought forward. Daniel points to the long line of right acts which the Lord had performed for his people all through the past, and now his appeal is that the Lord may extend this line and add still more great and blessed acts of this kind. The

Lord is to be true to himself in continuing such right acts. — The Hebrew for **I beseech thee** is the appended *na*, which may be rendered by the English: "please"; or the adverb: "kindly"; it draws earnest attention to what is asked. — The desire of Daniel's heart is first expressed negatively: **let thine anger and thy fury be turned away etc.** 'Aph is wrath or anger, the Lord's height of displeasure for our sins, together with the penalties this wrath inflicts. The term is intensified by *chemah*, "fervor of wrath" or "burning wrath," translated "fury." *Yashab*, from *shub*: "let thy wrath and fury turn away," etc., so that the inflicted penalties may now at last end. — **From thy city Jerusalem** contains a subtile but strong appeal in the possessive "thy." Likewise: **thy holy mountain**, namely Mt. Zion, on which the Temple stood, the Temple that now lay in ruins. It was the Lord's city and his mountain, for he had chosen both. Daniel cannot say "Temple," he can only say "mountain" — which here has a pathetic ring. That mountain is still "holy" or separate unto the Lord, for though the Temple and city were destroyed, the Lord had not abandoned this sacred locality permanently. One might think that Daniel should have prayed for his people, instead of for the city and Mt. Zion. But that assumes a contrast where there is none. For when the Lord's anger struck the city and Temple the people were driven out, and remained driven out as long as that anger lay upon the city. With that anger turned away the people would again be allowed by the Lord to return. Daniel's words are thus well chosen. — The clause with *ki* does not state a reason why the Lord should turn his wrath away, but acknowledges the justice of the Lord's wrath, and is thus once more a confession of sin: **because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, etc.** These sins and iniquities form a unit, for every sin of the children is like an approval of the sin of their

fathers. This mass of guilt is what had wrought such havoc, made **Jerusalem and thy people a reproach to all about us**, *cherphah*, a vituperation, object of shameful talk. "To all about us," i. e. the Gentile nations, has the plural of the adverb *sabib* = "around." They spoke derisively of Jerusalem and the exiled captive people Israel. Daniel here lays before the Lord the woful, wretched condition of the city and people, and begs him to change that by finally turning his anger away. The basis on which this plea rests is mentioned very distinctly at the end of both the following verses. It is a far higher basis than those suppose who think the *ki* clause states what is to move God, namely the vituperations of the Gentiles — a pretty low sort of motive at best.

V. 17 follows up the negative form of the petition by a restatement in positive form. **Now therefore**, really "and now" cannot then be a reference to this supposed motive, but resembles "and now" in v. 15. Boehmer makes it mean: "in this evil, critical time," which is not indicated in the text. It means in both verses: "and now, with this complete penitent acknowledgment of our sins." Nobody can hope to be heard by the Lord who does not fully acknowledge his sins. Of course, more is needed, but that acknowledgment is the first thing. — In v. 15 'Adonay 'Elohenu are used together; in v. 16 only 'Adonay, and now, as if joining the other half (the positive petition to the negative) 'Elohenu, **O our God**, expressing the same direct fervent appeal. Earnest petitioners thus find in the names of God a means for reaching his heart; the more earnestly they plead, the oftener the holy names rise to their lips. Sometimes, when other words fail, simply to cry God's name is enough, like a child calling its parent. — It is just such a cry of Daniel's heart when he says: **hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications**. He speaks of himself in the third person, which expresses humility. He as it were

points to himself praying thus and supplicating, for God to see and be moved by the sight. *Th^ophillah* is the general word for **prayer**, with the idea of interceding, to which here is added the plural *thachanunim*, from the hithpael of *chanan*, **supplications** or pleadings for grace. The two terms express exactly what Daniel was doing at this moment, namely praying for his people and imploring grace for them. In doing so he calls himself **the servant**, namely, one who humbly looks to God's will to do just what pleases him. The term here does not refer to Daniel's position as a prophet. — After the preamble that God may hear him comes the actual petition: **and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate**. Wrath and fury are like black clouds, grace and favor are like the shining sun. The verb *ha'er* is the hiphil from *'ur*, "to shine," and means "make shine." God's "face" is his presence, he himself in his presence. The sense is that God may look kindly, graciously, in friendly fashion upon the sanctuary at Jerusalem. There is wonderful reticence in this petition. Daniel does not tell God in detail what his heart desires; he leaves all details to God, only so that his anger yield to the shining of his face. There is a pathetic touch in "thy sanctuary that is desolate," *shamem*, namely ruined and forsaken. It ought to be grand and beautiful and thronged with worshipers. To know it "desolate" grieves Daniel so sorely, and surely must touch the Lord also. — And now Daniel states the motive to which he makes his appeal in these supplications: **for the Lord's sake**. This is in the third person, like "the prayer of thy servant and his supplications" in the first half of our verse. It is a mistake to identify "for the Lord's sake" with "for thine own sake" in v. 19. While alike, there is a difference. "For the Lord's sake" means: since thou art *'Adonay*, Ruler over all, whose sanctuary where he is worshipped as such cannot and must not lie desolate for ever. In the shining

of God's face we have the idea of bright and effulgent grace and favor; and now coupled with this, in the name 'Adonay, the idea of glorious power. Thus Daniel appeals to God.

In v. 18 Daniel continues the supplication, and then states just what he means by the expression: "for the Lord's sake" in v. 17. First the supplication, which in substance is a fervent cry for God to hear Daniel's prayer. The address is varied from "O our God" in v. 17 to **O my God** here in v. 18, making the appeal personal for Daniel. **Incline thine ear, and hear** is frequently used of men as well of God for favorable consideration. *Hatteh* is the hiphil from *natah*, "to give," the hiphil like the kal when used with "ear" meaning "to incline." "Incline thine ear" means to bend it toward the petitioner with kind intent. — The addition: **open thine eyes, and behold**, while it has the necessary objects added, is only a duplication, due to the fervor of the petitioner who begs God to hear and to see. This repeating of the cry to be heard is the importunity of all true prayer, illustrated so perfectly by Christ in Luke 11, 5-8 and 18, 1-8. In Daniel's prayer it reaches its height in v. 19: "hear . . . forgive . . . hearken and do, defer not!" One need not stress "open thine eyes" to imply that Daniel considered them closed heretofore. The entire expression: "open thine eyes, and behold" is only an earnest way of asking God to see. The long form *ph^eqachah* for the imperative is like the similar long form of the imperfect, and otherwise identical with *ph^eqah*, "open." — What God is to take note of is expressed by a hendiadys: **our desolations and the city which is called by thy name**, meaning in brief: our desolate city. The form *shom-mothenu* is the participle of the kal from *shamam*, to be desolate, or ruined. "Our desolations" are the ruined places that belong to us. Which ones are meant we are at once told: "and the city" etc. That this

condition of ruin should still continue in Jerusalem though the 70 years of the captivity were almost up, is what breaks Daniel's heart. Here again, as in the preceding text, we have the relative clause: "which is called by thy name," this time attached to "the city." The clause denotes ownership: the Lord's name makes this city his city. Yet here too, because it is the Lord (and his Name always means his revelation) there is more than ownership, it is the place where he revealed himself. That place is sacred to the Lord where he grants men his revelation. So Daniel implores God not merely to restore the city that is *his*, God's own, but the city where alone he had made such great revelation of himself. And observe that Jerusalem was so precious in Daniel's eyes for this combined reason, as God's own city and the city where God had so fully revealed himself.

Up to this point in v. 18 all has been preliminary, a further intense form of imploring. Now follows the real point in the entire statement, namely the motive by appealing to which Daniel hopes to move God. He has come to God, first with a clean-cut confession: "We have sinned," our sins and iniquities have made us a reproach; secondly with an equally clean-cut appeal to the Lord himself: "for the Lord's sake," not for ours for we are worthless. But "for the Lord's sake" is very brief and compact. Just what is meant? We now have the answer: **for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies.** Let us note first the lesser things. Daniel now uses the plurals "we," "our." He combined himself in confession with his people, he does the same now in supplication. So when he seemed to speak singly and called himself "thy servant" and implored God as "my God," he did not mean to sunder himself from his people. Paul, too, always acknowledged himself as a Jew. So there is a solidarity which makes us one with the outward earthly congregation

and church in which we are placed, sinful and imperfect though it be. — “We present our supplications before thee,” is lit.: “we cause them to fall” etc., *maphphilim*, the hiphil participle from *naphal*, “to fall.” The idea is that of laying the petitions humbly at the feet of God, of bowing in the dust before him in these prayers, of submitting to him completely for grace or refusal of grace. It is one of the features of genuine repentance. Therefore, too, as in v. 17 Daniel uses the humble term “supplications.” — Now the main things: not **for our righteousnesses**, *tsidqothenu*. We have had the same plural used of God in v. 16, which compare. Here the term is applied to the people whose sinfulness Daniel has so fully confessed, and of whose “righteousness” Isaiah had already said (64, 6), that they are all as filthy rags. These righteousnesses are right acts done according to the norm of right laid down by God, so that he would judicially approve of them as done according to that norm. In a general way we may call them “good works,” namely such as are good in God’s sight, although that would not make clear the term here used. Now Daniel might mean that he and his people had no such righteousnesses at all to present before God, hence he attempted to lay none at his feet in connection with this plea. But when we think of Daniel’s own exemplary life, for instance of this right prayer of his, and of others of his people who also were godly and devout, his meaning evidently is this, that whatever there might be of such right acts among his people, none of them does he lay down at God’s feet as supporting his petition, as inducements in any way to God to hear his prayer. At the very best all our righteousnesses are faulty, not one of them perfect. But more than this, by no righteousness of our own could we cover up a single sin we have committed. That is why Daniel omits all acts of righteousness as a foundation for his prayer for forgiveness. The

English has "for" our righteousnesses; the Hebrew has 'al, "upon," or on the ground of, i. e. that on which one relies in making a petition. — The ground of reliance on which Daniel rests his petition is: **for** (Hebr. "upon") **thy great mercies**, 'al-rachameka harabbim, "upon thy great *pities*," well known and often proved to be such. The plural of *racham*, used often of God, denotes the abdomen and inner parts as the seat of sympathy and tender, pitying feelings, "mercies" in this sense. J. Boehmer puts it well when he says that "to have mercy" means that "the impotence and misery of some person, and not his excellencies and attractive points, are made the (unexpected) reason for love." That is exactly Daniel's meaning here in bringing as inducements to God absolutely no virtue and no right deed of himself or his people, but only their deplorable condition as a reproach to all their neighbors, the desolations of the City and its sanctuary, and the utter helplessness of the exiled nation in all these years. Yet, one thing should be well noted in Daniel's appeal to God's "great mercies" as here described in his prayer. Daniel does not mean that God should, because of this miserable condition, simply turn his anger and wrath away and let his favor shine forth again; for God could not possibly do that. In v. 19 appears the significant petition: "O Lord, forgive." Note well that Daniel has said nothing of any repentance on the part of the exiled people. His meaning is this, that the Lord God by his "great mercies" lead the people to full and complete repentance, and thus build Jerusalem and the Temple again. A people that remained obdurate and simply went on in sin even the Lord could not receive again and bless. But by his mercy which pities the sinner he can indeed remove his sin through repentance, and then show the pardoned sinner the light of his countenance.

SUGGESTIONS

Several texts in this series exemplify prayer; besides our text the one for The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity containing Solomon's prayer, and the one for The Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity containing David's prayer. On each of these texts one might preach on prayer and show just how we ought to pray acceptably unto God. Obviously, however, this would be a mistake, as no pericope line could properly have so many texts on prayer, and that in the after-Trinity season. The one fixed place for the great subject of prayer in the church year is Rogate Sunday in the Pentecost cycle; and prayer properly belongs there, because it is always connected with the Holy Spirit. So the subject of these three after-Trinity texts is not prayer, but something else, namely, that with which these three prayer-texts deal. Now, of course, one may say something in the sermon about prayer when any one of these texts is treated, but whatever is thus said should be only incidental. — Another thing to note is that our text is freely chosen. That means, it is not a mere echo of some text for this Sunday found in an old pericope line. The old gospel text for this Sunday is that of the Pharisee and the publican praying in the Temple. Now in a way Daniel's penitent prayer is a counterpart to the publican's sigh: God be merciful to me a sinner. But that is all — a thing merely incidental, and if used at all to be used only in an incidental way. That means, it would be a mistake to let the old gospel text control the handling of our Old Testament text. — Let us hold, then, to the true subject before us in this text. We are beginning a treatment of the main characteristics of the Godly Life, the traits which go with that life, mark and embellish it and show its healthy development. At once we understand what our text presents to us; for *the very first and fundamental trait of the Godly Life is repentance*. It is that, all the way through the Godly Life, even as Luther put it in the first of his 95 Theses: "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when he says: Repent, etc., requires that the entire life of the believers be repentance." Our pericope line must have a text on repentance; that text is before us now.

With this point settled we decline to consider themes like some of J. Boehmer's: "Individual and joint prayer"; "Daniel a man of prayer after the heart of God"; "The godly congregation's prayer of repentance and supplication"; and C. W. Bachman's: "Daniel's model prayer." The latter elaborates well: "1) He reveres God's righteousness and acknowledges his mercies; 2) He confesses his own sins and the sins of the people;

3) He manifests intense earnestness of pleading; 4) He is rewarded by having his prayer heard and answered," *Sermon Sketches on Old Testament Texts*, p. 116. The great trouble is that such an elaboration is on prayer, when it should be on repentance.— More in line with the purpose of the text is Boehmer's theme: "The blessing of confessing sin," although his elaboration is too inferior to be mentioned here.

Here is what we should see in our text:

Daniel Teaches us How to Confess Our Sins.

From him we learn:

- I. *That we must know and admit our sins.*
- II. *That we must see God's anger is just.*
- III. *That we must plead in the dust before God.*
- IV. *That we must drop all our own righteousnesses.*
- V. *That we must cry only for God's mercies.*

This arrangement is a simple analytical one, taking the chief thoughts of the text in the order in which they appear in the text, without rearranging or regrouping them.—

Here is another:

Daniel's Model Confession of Sin.

There is in his confession, as there must be in ours also:

- I. *Deep grief for the wickedness of sin.*
- II. *Complete admission of the guilt of sin.*
- III. *Genuine feeling of God's wrath for sin.*
- IV. *Not the least effort to pay for sin.*
- V. *The mercy of God as the only escape from sin.*

These outlines bid the preacher dwell somewhat longer than is usually done on the crushing and humbling features in true confession of sin. It is very necessary. Too often the acknowledgment of sin is superficial. Let us deepen it.—

Daniel's Penitent Heart.

Is it a picture of your heart, as you bow in daily contrition and repentance? Daniel's heart was:

- I. *Crushed;* II. *Confident.*

Luther's first thesis: "Our Lord and Master," etc. The Catechism of Luther: "What does such baptizing with water signify? It signifies that the old Adam in us," etc. Again: "What is Confession? Confession embraces two parts," etc. All the saints in both Testaments have constantly confessed their sins. Our confession in every morning service, and before every Communion. What it means to refuse such confession. The folly of all self-righteousness, popular, and taught by Rome and others.

The Godly Life is Always Marked by the Genuine Confession of Sin.

- I. It could not be godly without getting rid of sin.*
- II. It could not get rid of sin without confession.*
- III. It could not confess without dropping all self-righteousness.*
- IV. It could not drop all self-righteousness without casting itself wholly on God's mercy.*

The text is easy to handle when its main thought is clearly apprehended. Analytical treatment is most natural. The preacher will find still other, and probably better, divisions and themes. — We offer one of a different type:

"Not for our Righteousness, but for Thy Great Mercies."

- I. The one way out of the tangle of sin and guilt.*
- II. The one way in to the haven of pardon and peace.*

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Is. 29, 18-21

Isaiah has six "Woe" chapters, 28-33, filled with denunciation and announcements of punishment. Chapter 28 has the "Woe" on Ephraim or the northern kingdom called Israel, at this time not yet carried into captivity. Then comes chapter 29, from which our text is taken, with its "Woe" on Ariel, which is Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom called Judah. Ariel, the city where David dwelt, shall be distressed, besieged, brought very low as one that whispers out of the dust, 29, 1-5. But Isaiah announces a mighty change. Ariel's enemies shall be like dust and chaff, blown away, and their plan to destroy Ariel shall turn out as when a hungry man dreams of eating — it shall not get beyond being a dream of theirs, v. 6-8. — But this prophecy of Isaiah is utterly beyond the people to whom he announces it. So in v. 8 Isaiah tells them to stand and stare and cry out. The Lord has made them blind with a spirit of sleep, i. e. they who would not hear, now shall not hear. They with their rulers and seers shall be like a man to whom a sealed book is given to read, and he is unable to read it because it is sealed, v. 11; or like a man who cannot read, and has to hand the book back unread, because he cannot read. To sum it up, in the first twelve verses is 1) Ariel's fearful humiliation; 2) Ariel's astounding deliverance; 3) the utter inability of the leaders and people to understand either the humiliation or the deliverance. — V. 13-17 goes on and shows how these silly, blind rulers and people imagined they could deceive the Lord himself with their hypocrisy (13) and with their secret alliance with Egypt (v. 15:

“seek deep and hide their counsel,” so that Isaiah should know nothing of it); just as if things were reversed, and the clay should remark of the potter that he did not know his business (16). And now the Lord announces through Isaiah, that in a little while he will make a mighty substitution, Lebanon with its mountains and forests shall be as a fruitful field; and the fruitful field shall be as a mountain forest, v. 17. This is proverbial language and signifies that the Lord will find himself a new people. The Gentiles, anything but a fruitful field now, more like mountain forests absolutely wild and untilled, will become a field waving with grain under the Lord’s tillage; and the Jews who would not submit to the Lord’s tillage, shall be abandoned and be like the Gentiles were, mountain forests wild and untilled, cf. Is. 65, 1-3. — At this point our text begins.

18. And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. 19. The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. 20. For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: 21. That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.

Obdurate Israel would not see nor hear, so the judgment came upon them that they should not see and hear. Isaiah’s mission to his people was this very thing: “Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” Is. 6, 10; be sure to read also the following verses 11-13. The Lord was rejecting this obdurate

people, all except a remnant; he would graft wild olive branches in the tree, Rom. 11, 17 etc., after breaking out the useless original branches. Thus he would at last have a people willing to hear and see. Recall the prayer of Jesus: "I thank thee, o Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes," Matth. 11, 25. In the new covenant, in the Christian Church, this prophecy is realized: the Lord's people see and hear his Word. For this is one of the characteristics of the Godly Life, namely *open ears and seeing eyes*. That characteristic belongs to both covenants alike. Even now he who will not see and hear is rejected of the Lord. So the substance of our text and its purpose in our line of texts is clear.

In that day refers to v. 17, and means the day when the Lord has substituted believing Gentiles for unbelieving Jews, in the New Testament or Messianic day. In that day **shall the deaf hear the words of the book**, which puts the thing paradoxically. For how can the deaf hear? These are not the obdurate rulers and people who now refuse to hear, since the Lord has determined they shall not hear, i. e. understand. Nor does the Hebrew article intend to say that all who are deaf shall hear. "The deaf" are those indicated in v. 17, namely "Lebanon turned into a fruitful field," Gentile believers who will join the true Israel. Once without spiritual life they were deaf, once strangers and foreigners, they are now fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, Eph. 2, 19.—Therefore, Isaiah also says: they **shall hear the words of the book**, namely written words that are read unto them. He says nothing of oral words, such as he was now speaking to his people. Evidently in that day there would be no more prophets and messengers from the Lord inspired to speak by word of mouth. The Lord's words would all be re-

corded in a book. So "the words of the book" cannot here mean the Torah, or any writing of Isaiah, there being no hint to that effect. Delitzsch thinks of written words which Isaiah used in admonishing the people; but we do not know whether he used such words, and if he did it certainly was not to any extent. "Book-words" here means any and all words which "in that day" would be recorded as the Lord's words by Inspiration. — No new class of men is meant in the addition: **and the eyes of the blind shall see etc.** Where there is no godly life there is neither spiritual hearing nor seeing. But where faith enters men see as well as hear. But now Isaiah cannot say: shall see "the words of the book." These people who once were blind because far from the light are now seeing: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. 4, 6. There is no need to specify some object that is seen. The point stressed is that they *see*, their eyes are no longer blind and unable to see. The Hebrew puts forward emphatically the synonymous phrases: **out of obscurity, and out of darkness.** There is little difference between *'ophel* and *choshek*, since both mean darkness. The English by using different terms merely imitates the Hebrew. Some of the commentators read *min*, "out of," realistically, as if these blind people who see were actually surrounded by darkness and thus see out of it. But this darkness is spiritual, not outwardly around these persons, but within them; it is the darkness of their own blindness. It would be impossible even with sound eyes to see "out of" darkness that envelops one. "To see out of darkness" is the same as saying, "the blind shall see." When sight comes, the blindness together with its darkness is at an end.

V. 19 adds two further designations for the people already called "the deaf" who hear and "the blind"

who see. The first designation is **the meek**, *'anavim*, they who submit themselves, here used evidently with reference to the Lord, a term occurring also in the New Testament, Matth. 5, 5. It accords well with "the deaf" and "the blind" whom the Lord has brought to hear and see, that they should be meek, humble, lowly, and wholly submissive to their great spiritual Benefactor. They submit first of all in repentance, and then to his direction in his Word and in the guidance of their lives. They **also shall increase their joy in the LORD**, *yas^ephu*, from *yasaph*, "shall add in the Lord joy." Hearing and seeing "the words of the book," understanding the gracious revelations of the Lord, they who are meek and submit themselves to him and accept his words, naturally shall add to what they have already received of the Lord, namely joy in him. This is the spiritual joy and delight that one has in communion and union with the Lord. The more we hear and see his Word and thus learn to know him, the greater is our happiness. While all who are deaf and blind to his Word, whatever joy they are able to grasp, miss the only true, satisfying, and abiding joy. — The meek are further called **the poor among men**, they who know and feel their spiritual poverty as far as any possession of their own is concerned. By their hearing, now that their darkness is removed from them, their own poverty is made plain. The combination "the poor of men" is unusual, except that it classifies them as one peculiar group of human beings standing out as such from all the rest, poor in a kind of superlative way, Delitzsch. — There is a kind of paradox in saying of the poor that they **shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel**. It is the same paradox that lies hidden in all the previous statements. For how can the deaf hear, the blind see, the submissive and yielding add anything? It is strange, but the moment they begin to realize their deafness and blindness, that moment they begin to hear and

see, and submitting themselves to him who thus opens their ears and eyes they begin to add joy to the joy of hearing and seeing they already have after being deaf and blind. It is paradoxical in statement, but perfectly clear when understood. So also these same people now recognizing themselves as poor and in need of everything. How can that bring them joy? It ought, one might think, produce great grief. But their very feeling of poverty and great need is the condition for their receiving the greatest wealth, and thus the sweetest joy. — **The Holy One of Israel** is a title used by Isaiah throughout his book, 12 times in the first and 17 times in the second half, as if the two halves were firmly bound together with this signature, proving both to be written by Isaiah. *Q'dosh Yisrael* is he who has separated himself to belong to Israel. The title thus refers to the covenant relation. By word and deed, that is by promise and saving acts, this sanctifying and separating was made. While thus infinitely gracious for Israel the title implied on Israel's part that they recognize and honor him as thus separated unto themselves, by breaking off any relation to other gods, and turning from everything that would compel the Lord to turn again from them. — Thus to rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, *yagilu* from *gil-gul*, "to turn" with joy, to jubilate, means for these "poor" to feel the joy of having the Lord for their very own, since having him is more than to have everything else: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Ps. 73, 25. Such joy is the blessed result of hearing "the words of the book" and seeing its blessed truth, instead of being deaf and blind as are those who walk in their own darkness.

V. 20-21 are added to show why this new people of the Lord can indeed rejoice in the Lord. The wicked leaders of the people in Isaiah's time kept the old covenant nation in blindness and deafness and even

crushed by violence and cunning any effort to return to the Lord. One feels that Isaiah in these two verses speaks from bitter and painful experience with them. In the new era the Lord's people shall be free from such leadership and tyranny. There will, of course, still be men who fight against the Lord, his Word, and all godly people, but they shall be outside the Church and thus unable to do the damage done in Isaiah's time, and we may add also in the times of Christ (Caiaphas, the Pharisees, Sadducees, etc.). — **For the terrible one is brought to nought**, *'aphem*, "ceases," disappears; *'arits*, he who inspires terror, the violent man, the tyrant. — **And the scorner is consumed**, *kalah*, "is finished," fades away; *lets*, as in Ps. 1 "the scornful," the mocker or scoffer. These two are individualized. The one uses brutality, the other scorn and ridicule, and together they force the people away from the Lord and his Word. — The third clause summarizes: and all that **watch for iniquity are cut off**, *nikr^othu* from *karath*, "have been felled"; all that watch for iniquity = *die auf Nichtswuerdigkeit bedacht sind* (Koenig), whose one concern is baseness. This class summarily includes the two classes represented in the first lines by two individuals. Isaiah is speaking of all the tyrants, scoffers, and other enemies of the Lord who at that time were driving the people to ruin. The whole grand class of these wretches, including others that may yet arise, will be swept to destruction, and in their place the Lord will gather him a people ready to hear and see, submissive and thankful to receive his grace and gifts. — But the prophet names some of the abominable practices of these enemies of the Lord. **That make a man an offender for a word**, *machati'ey*, the hiphil participle from *chata'*, are those who pronounce a man a sinner (Gesenius, Koenig, etc.) because of a single word he may have said, which they twist to his undoing. No doubt, Isaiah had this done to some of his words, and

we know how the enemies of Jesus tried again and again to trap him in some word, either in order to discredit him completely, or in order to lay a charge against him. — Their next scheme and practice was: **and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate**, for the *mokiach*, hiphil participle from *yakach*, “him that defends some one’s right” when a case is tried “in the gate,” the regular place where judges have their court. If, for instance, these base fellows tried to make a man a criminal on account of a word, or other trumped-up charge, and in the trial at the gate were confronted by a defender who exposed and reproveth their proceeding, they turned their resentment against him, and in some cunning way laid a snare, or set a trap for him, to work his undoing. *Y^eqoshun* is the future kal from *yaqash*, used of bird-catchers, “set a snare.” — The chain is completed in the final statement: **and turn aside the just for a thing of nought**. *Tsaddiq* is a just or righteous man, who in heart and life tries to obey the Lord, i. e. accord with the Lord’s norm of right and be approved of the Lord in judgment. Of course, the *tsaddiq* by his very character will be *persona non grata* to the ungodly class here sketched. Even if he quietly goes his way they cannot refrain from damaging him. *Yattu*, the hiphil from *natah*, does not mean **turn aside**, which seems to be meant in the sense of other translations such as “deprive of his right,” which are too much under the influence of the two previous clauses in referring to indictments and trials. The bare verb means *verdraengen* (Koenig for our passage), “displace,” crowd out. Not in a legal sense such as crowd out of his rights at court, but in a general sense: out of the esteem of men. They rob him of his standing among men, of his good name. And this they do *bathohu*, with or **for a thing of nought**, which is a good rendering for *thohu*, vacuity, emptiness, reasons to which there is nothing, i. e. without basis of fact,

put forward only with a "show of right" to undermine a man's standing. We may well take it that Isaiah suffered thus "for a thing of nought," when he and the other true prophets and their adherents were slandered as traitors to their people and conspirators against their welfare.—These violent and unscrupulous men were in control when Isaiah pronounced his woes. Remember the woes Jesus pronounced on the very same kind of evil leaders in his day. They would all go down in judgment, hastening their own doom by these very acts of violence, deceit, and hypocrisy. The Lord would find himself a people of an entirely different character, namely willing and ready to hear the truth, to see it and live according to it. Those godless men in Isaiah's and in Christ's time lived in a world of their own dreaming and invention, in the idea that might was right, cunning and lies legitimate means to use, the Lord a lying fool like themselves whose Word and will might be scorned with impunity. We still have men like that, but who are now outside of the Lord's people. Sometimes the church, too, is still afflicted with them, but their base, immoral efforts soon cause them to be shed off. They that are godly have seeing eyes, hearing ears, and thus hearts that are constantly renewed and purified.

SUGGESTIONS

As in the previous text so in this one we must warn against a misconception of its real purpose. This is not a text on the tribulations of the godly man. In due time we shall have a text on that necessary subject, namely, for The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity. Hence we discard all outlines which deal with "The cross and suffering in the Messianic Kingdom"; "The unfortunate on earth and what the prophet promises them in the new kingdom of God"; "What about earthly need and earthly woe in the new kingdom of the Messiah." Aside from the wrong subjects embodied in these themes, the entire elab-

orations suggested do violence to the plain sense of the text. It is one of the worst kinds of homiletical sins to make a text say what it does not mean. In the middle ages they put a man on the rack and applied thumb-screws to force him to confess what his judges demanded. It is even worse so to force out of a text ideas which are suggested to it and which the text truthfully cannot admit as its own. — It is probable that the choice of our text was influenced by the old gospel text. Mark 7, 31-37, the healing of one that was deaf, to whom Jesus said Ephphatha. If so, the parallel cannot be accepted as of any consequence. That man was physically deaf, our text has people spiritually deaf. Thus only by allegorizing could we secure a parallel, and to allegorize the miracles of Jesus is to pervert their real purpose, tacking things onto them with which these great signs and seals of Christ have literally nothing to do. Moreover, this deaf man in the old gospel was at the same time dumb, and our text from Isaiah says not a word about dumbness, while it does say something very pertinent on blind hearts whose eyes are opened to see. So let us drop any reference to the old gospel text, and use Isaiah's words in their own native sense. The prophet is speaking of the Church of our own day, and he is characterizing its people as the deaf that hear, the blind that see, and the submissive and poor that have great joy. We are fully entitled to lift out the deaf and the blind and speak of them brought to hearing and sight, since only by thus hearing the Lord's Word and seeing the truth in faith are they made submissive and poor in spirit and as a result made rich in the Joy of Christ. The main part of our text thus consists of v. 18-19; and the other two verses are of minor import, as also they are negative in form. That means, however, that the common form of analysis cannot be applied here. The preacher cannot treat this text like a sausage, tying it off in links — the first piece of the text part one; the second piece part two; and so on till the text is used up — although this type of preacher hardly ever ventures beyond the stereotype two or three part sermon. You cannot tie off even the first two verses for part one, and take what is left for part two, and make a real sermon of it, unified and balanced. Actually it is a good thing to meet a few texts like this that pry preachers out of old time-worn homiletical ruts. They may blame the text for not submitting to their hackneyed treatment, which does not injure the text in the least — only so they obey the text and give up their narrow ways of preaching. —

Blessed are they Who Hear and See the Words of the Book!

- I. *They are delivered out of darkness.*
- II. *They are filled with joy in the Lord.*

In part one use the last two verses of the text as a sample of what men are and do when they obdurately refuse to hear and see, and thus remain in black darkness. In part two do not omit to show the substance of what the words of the book contain, and how this centers in the Holy One of Israel, with the glorious effect of joy and rejoicing for all who are submissive and poor in spirit, and thus ready to receive from the Lord. —

The Deaf Shall Hear and the Blind Shall See.

- I. *The greatest spiritual miracle, wrought by the Words of the Book.*
- II. *The highest spiritual blessing, centering in the saving knowledge of the Holy One of Israel.*

Isaiah's Word on**Seeing Eyes and Hearing Ears.**

- I. *Once blind and deaf.*
- II. *Then in obscurity and darkness.*
- III. *Now opened by the Words of the Book.*
- IV. *Ever after rejoicing in the Lord.*

Some may prefer to treat the text historically. They may speak of the woes which Isaiah pronounced on Judah, and of the counterpart of these Woes pronounced by Jesus in his day. Yet Isaiah saw a new and wonderful day in the future. It is the day in which we live.

Isaiah's Prophecy Concerning the Deaf and Blind is Fulfilled.

- I. *The day of obscurity and darkness is past.*
- II. *The day of rejoicing in Israel's Holy One is come.*

All Who are Godly have Hearing Ears and Seeing Eyes.

This is I. *Their distinguishing mark;* II. *Their great blessing;* III. *Their escape from judgment.*

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Zech. 7, 4-10

This is our text on *good works*, for certainly good works are characteristic of the Godly Life. — The occasion for the answer of the Lord in chapters seven and eight was the question propounded to the priests and prophets in Jerusalem by the people of Bethel through two representatives, whether to continue the fast which for seventy years had been observed by the Jews for the day of the burning of the Temple and Jerusalem, or not. This was in the fourth year of king Darius, in the month Chisleu, namely in December 518 B. C., thus two years after beginning the rebuilding of the Temple, and two years before its completion. Since their captivity the Jews had kept the seventh day of the fifth month called Ab, our month of August, as a fast day, for on that day in the year 586 B. C. the burning had begun. Jer. 52, 12-13 makes it the tenth day of Ab. Probably the desecration and burning began on the seventh and was ended on the tenth. The Jews now observe the ninth of Ab. The rebuilding of the Temple was now progressing, after the first hindrances had been overcome; the city, too, was rising out of its ruins. So the question about the day of fasting, whether to continue or to cease its observance, naturally arose. The men of Bethel sent a delegation of two to inquire at the Temple of the priests and prophets. The Lord himself makes answer through Zechariah. Part of that answer forms our text. The full answer is, that the Lord does not ask fasting of his people, but righteousness and love; that the root of their misfortune is the transgression of

these commandments; and that he promises all good to his people if they will prove faithful and true. Our text has two parts, first v. 4-7, stating that fasting is nothing as far as the Lord is concerned; secondly v. 8-10 that the Lord has always been concerned about the far more important matters of judgment and mercy.

4. Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5. Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, when ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? 6. And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? 7. Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?

“For the people to fast or not to fast is a matter of indifference to God. The right fasting that pleases God does not consist in sanctimonious refraining from food and drink, but in heeding God’s Word and living according to it, as already the prophets prior to the exile had preached to the people. Thus the dream, that by fasting one might earn the grace of God, was abolished, and it was left to the people whether they wished further to retain the previous fast-days; at the same time they were told what the Lord required of them if they desired to obtain the promised gifts of grace.” Keil. Some secondary and very minor question has often been the occasion for elucidating a great major principle of the faith. St. Paul took the casual questions that arose in the congregations and answered them on the grand basis of the truths they involved. So the Lord does here with the business of fasts arranged by the Jews’ own authority. He might

have dismissed the question with a simple "Do as you please." Instead he goes much deeper. The question as propounded by the men of Bethel seems innocent in its way, and it even looks proper that they should ask the answer from the authorities in Jerusalem. And yet there is something highly unsatisfactory in the matter. This fast, arranged by the Jews themselves, is treated as a very weighty matter, as though a great deal depended on the issue of having or not having it. The question betrays that these returned exiles were clinging too much to outward rites and prescribed ceremonies, i. e. were seeking righteousness before God in mere human, even in mere self-appointed, works. That is why the Lord answers the question himself through his prophet, answers at such length, brushes this fasting aside with some disdain, and points to the real things he is concerned about and wants his people to concern themselves about likewise.

Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, states the fact, and omits the manner, which is not our concern. The Lord never did have any trouble to convey to his prophets exactly what he wanted to convey, and to enable them to repeat (and write down) his words exactly as he conveyed them. — Here the prophet receives a verbatim message from the Lord, which he transmits as such, the Lord using the first person of himself in speaking through the prophet. At the same time the Lord's own direction to Zechariah: **Speak unto all the people of the land**, for it concerns them all, **and to the priests** in particular as they who direct the worship of the people, informs the prophet that the Lord's message has an importance for beyond little Bethel and its inhabitants. — In the clause: **When ye fasted and mourned etc.**, *ki* is temporal: "when," not conditional, and the second verb *saphod* the infinitive absolute continuing the preceding finite verb, as if the two actions were combined in one. *Saphad* originally means "to beat the

breasts," and then more generally "to lament." — Two fasts or days of mourning arranged by the Jews are now mentioned: **in the fifth and seventh** (supply: month, *chodesh*), namely on the tenth of Chisleu (December) on account of the destruction of Jerusalem as already explained; and on the third of Tisri (October) on account of the murder of Gedaliah, 2 Kgs. 25, 25; Jer. 41, 1 etc., the governor of the cities of Judah left by the Chaldeans when the exile began, who was a kind and good ruler, and whose murder the Jews considered a great calamity. These fasts the Jews had kept **even those seventy years** of the captivity; literally: "and this seventy years," using the accusative for extent of time, and the singular *shanah* "year," which is put regularly in Hebrew when numerals from 20 to 90 precede *shanah*. The men of Bethel had asked only about the former fast day. The Lord here adds the second one, because his word in regard to fasting is to cover all such days of mourning arranged by the people, not, however, the fasting prescribed in the law on the great day of Atonement, Lev. 23, 26. Therefore also in 8, 19 the Lord mentions four of these fasts, besides the two already noted, the one on the ninth of Tammuz (July) because of the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, Jer. 39, 2; 56, 6 etc., and the one on the tenth of Tebeth (January) because of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, Jer. 39, 1. Later on the Pharisees fasted on Monday and Thursday and considered this practice as highly meritorious before God, Luke 2, 37; 18, 12. — Now in regard to these self-imposed fasts the Lord raises the question: **did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?** The English tries to give the force of the Hebrew which strengthens the verb by adding the infinitive absolute, by translating: "did ye at all fast"; we might put it: "did ye earnestly fast"; "did ye in fasting fast." "Unto me" is here not expressed by *li*, the usual dative, but by a suffix to the verb, which is really an ac-

cusative: "did ye fast me," i. e. in any way by your fasting affect me. And to emphasize the personal suffix "me" the *pronomen separatum* 'ani is added: "even to me." The Lord's pointed question implies the answer, that all this sedulous fasting never affected him; and if it was intended by the Jews to reach, affect, and in any way move him, it was in this respect a complete failure. Here we have an answer to the whole question of fasts arranged by the authorities of the church. Read the Augsburg Confession, Art. 26: "Of the Distinction of Meats," and note these statements: "Christianity was thought to consist wholly in the observance of certain holy-days, rites, *fasts*, and vestures. The observances had won for themselves the exalted title of being the spiritual life and the perfect life. Meanwhile the commandments of God, according to each one's calling, were without honor, namely, that the father brought up his offspring, that the mother bore children, that the prince governed the commonwealth, — these were accounted works that were worldly and imperfect, and far below those glittering observances. . . . Therefore, we do not condemn fasting in itself, but the traditions which prescribe certain days and certain meats, with peril of conscience, as though such works were a necessary service," and the passages Matth. 15, 9; Rom. 14, 17; Col. 2, 16; Acts 15, 10; 1 Tim. 4, 1 and 3, where the prohibition of meats is called "a doctrine of devils." *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 71 etc.*

To bring out the full sense of the first question in v. 5, another is added in v. 6: **And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink, for yourselves?** lit.: be "not ye the

* The Roman Catholic discipline distinguishes between *jejuniūm* as eating nothing, prescribing this for one day fasting, softened to *semijejuniūm* from 6 in the evening till 3 in the afternoon, later on till noon; and *abstinentia*, not eating meat, also perhaps not milk, butter, eggs, etc.

ones eating, the ones drinking?" The sense is: I had nothing of it; it was all your affair. Luther comments: "Just you attend to what I bid you, and let fasting be fasting." As far as the question of the men of Bethel is concerned, the Lord's answer amounts to this, that he is not concerned about that fast, never was, and it is wholly immaterial to him whether the custom is retained or not. In the Old Testament the Lord himself prescribed certain fasts, and these like other ceremonial regulations had to be observed in the spirit and for the purpose indicated by the Lord. Fasts arranged by the Jews themselves were treated by the Lord as matters of indifference. In the New Testament there are no prescribed fasts at all. The church has no authority to prescribe fasts; hence we have no authorized fast days. Any fasting in the Christian church is voluntary. There are times when one naturally desires to fast, as in deep grief and affliction. There are occasions when in the spiritual life one may be inclined to fast, as when weighed down in conscience by a depressing feeling of sin, or when one prepares to receive the Lord's Supper, or when one feels it profitable to deny his appetites in the way of self-discipline. All such fasting is not prescribed, but wholly voluntary, a natural accompaniment of personal experiences, without a shadow of merit. Fasting thus is a mere symbol, and is never to be used except when the feeling which it symbolizes is actually present. With the hygienic side of fasting religion has nothing to do.

V. 7 adds a third question which corroborates the implied answers of the preceding two by reminding the people and priests of the words spoken by the prophets before the exile. The sentence is elliptical, the verb being omitted, as is occasionally the case in dramatic speech — here the three questions are really dramatic. The Hebrew merely has the question sign *h* and **not the words**, so that we may read: "Heard

ye not the words?" "Know ye not the words?" or anything to the same effect. There is something like rebuke in this question, for it implies that the Jews should have remembered what the Lord had told them during the past. — There is a peculiar combination in the relative clause: **which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets**, lit.: "by the hand of the former prophets," — *qara' b'yad*, "hath cried by the hand," where we would expect: "hath cried by the mouth." The Lord is speaking here of the prophets who lived more than seventy years ago, before Judah was brought into exile. The words of these prophets the present generation of Judah had only in writing. "By the hand" refers to the written form of the words of the Lord; by this writing, however, the Lord cried just as he did when those prophets spoke his messages. The thought is that the Lord's words are permanent and speak by means of inspired hands to all future generations. Both spoken and written revelation are identical. — The time of the prophets to whom the Lord refers is: **when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, etc.** The Hebrew construction is hard to imitate in English. The infinitive construct *bihyoth*, "to be," is after the preposition *b^e*, and is followed by Jerusalem with the feminine kal participle for dwelling (inhabited) and the adjective for quiet or at peace; hence literally: "in (the) being of Jerusalem inhabited and at peace," i. e. while she was in this condition. The sentence goes on in the same construction after the infinitive with *b^e*: "and her cities round about her and the south and the lowland (or plain) inhabited," i. e. they all being in this condition. The masculine singular *yosheb* is quite regular, though the three preceding nouns differ in number and gender; see the grammars. What prophets the Lord here refers to, and what words of theirs, is in dispute among those who crowd as many prophets as possible into the post-

exilic era. Read Is. 58, 5-7; 1, 17; 5, 23; Ex. 22, 21-22; 23, 6-9; Ez. 22, 6-7; etc. The cities round about Jerusalem are those whose prosperity depended on her; "the south" is the country bordering on Edom, Josh. 15, 21; and "the plain" is the lowland toward the Mediterranean Sea. The priest and people had revelation enough not to let this question concerning a fast day and its continuance or abrogation perplex them. Alas, like so many people and preachers now they do not know what they have, or do not know how to use the plain and vital sense of what they have in the divine written words.

8. And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, 9. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother. 10. And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

The tone of the first part of the text is quite negative; the second part is decidedly positive. Here the Lord very directly declares to priests and people what he is deeply concerned about, namely genuine good works, the real and abundant fruits of faith. Our text stops with this declaration, while the Lord goes on and tells Judah how their forefathers refused to obey this word of his and thus suffered the terrors of exile, etc. — The peculiarity that in v. 8 **Zechariah** names himself is no reason for the queer idea that this "Zechariah" was not our prophet, but one antedating the exile, who is now quoted by our prophet. The preamble in v. 8 is like the rest in chapters 7 and 8. In fact, the prophet uses this kind of preamble at the head of each section of this reply of the Lord, as if he intended to sign each section as truly the Lord's own answer. Yet there must be some reason why

this section, v. 8-14, is headed by a preamble containing the prophet's own name "Zechariah." Perhaps Zechariah inserts his name this time in order to remind us of that older Zechariah, 2 Chron. 24, 20 etc., whose brief message does remind one of what the Lord here spoke to our prophet; in particular we note the resemblance to v. 13. — **Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts** puts the divine stamp on what follows. There is no need of translating, as Keil does: "Thus spoke" etc., as if the Lord were himself summarily quoting what he had spoken through the former prophets. The Lord has already said that Judah ought to know what those former prophets wrote. Now he repeats anew what he is concerned about. Fasting he leaves to the judgment of the people themselves, but this he must demand as evidence of true godliness: **Execute true judgment**, literally: "judgment of the truth," in every case of dispute. Without fear or favor, without partiality to anyone, with only the one thought of deciding truly and right, render all your decisions at trials. That means that justice and righteousness is to rule in the land, and that for the Lord's sake. — Secondly: **show mercy and compassions every man to his brother**. First righteousness, then love; compare Jer. 7, 5-6 for The Tenth Sunday after Trinity. *Chesed* is mercy in the sense of undeserved favor, a term used often of God's loving-kindness. This *chesed* is to be general, in all the relations of one man to another. And paired with it *rachamim*, from *rechem*, in the plural the abdomen and inward parts as the seat of sympathy and pity; hence feelings, and corresponding acts, of compassion. *'Ish 'achiv* (from *'ach*, "brother") means: "each other," mutually, one another. And this also generally, in order to obey and please the Lord. Note that these are the Lord's requirements, and are to be followed as such. This is more than mere civil righteousness; it

is the expression of godliness. Look at v. 11-12 which show how the disregard of these requirements was the result of hardening the hearts against the Lord and his words on the part of the generation prior to the exile.

V. 10 shows by examples some of the things that will be impossible where righteousness and mutual sympathy and compassion rule: **And oppress not the widow**, *'ashaq*, do violence to, exploit, frighten, and thus "oppress." The objects are put first, namely all friendless, lone, and helpless persons: **the widow, nor the fatherless**, orphan, **the stranger, nor the poor**, *'ani*, who is in a lowly position, burdened, perhaps a servant. The negative "oppress not" involves the corresponding positive: oppress not — by helping, aiding, comforting, and in general showing compassion. All this again for the Lord's sake. Matth. 25, 40. — That no mere outward observance is meant by all these requirements we see from the final addition which refers to the heart: **and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart**, *chashab*, "calculate," invent, think up; here again: *'ish 'achiv*, mutually, etc., as in v. 9. Literally: "and evil mutually calculate not in your heart." That again means to include the positive: Think up, invent, calculate only good in your heart toward each other. In substance this is the same as the Tenth Commandment which forbids all covetous thoughts and thereby requires thoughts altogether pure and full of love. Only a godly heart in which the Lord dwells by grace through faith can meet this requirement. This also shows how the other requirements are to be regarded, namely as evidences of a godly heart. Here the Lord shows us the true fasting which is well pleasing in his sight.

SUGGESTIONS

A good many Lutheran preachers who have grown up in the sunshine of the pure doctrine of grace and justification by faith alone have after all not learned how to preach in true biblical and Lutheran fashion on good works. Perhaps they preach on good works alone, i. e., pound hard on the doing of good works, and hammer those who are short on good works. That is one beautiful way to leave the silent impression of work-righteousness in their hearers' hearts. Perhaps they dogmatize, and expound that good works must be done, but have no merit with God. When they are through there is but a languid impulse left in their hearers' hearts to go and do good works as they really should. Some are caught by the modern catchword "service" — our text would be a fine morsel for them. They ring the changes on "service" and make the Christian's life one of service and still more service and never enough service. If they are of the genuine type they drive their hearers with such lashings that these poor creatures run till their tongues hang out and they fall prostrate from their exertion. They get people to do so much "church work" in societies and all sorts of gatherings, conventions, and other doings that when the Lord comes to call on these people he actually never finds them at home. Finally we note those preachers to whom somebody in authority in the church sold the peculiar wisdom that we preach too much justification and not enough sanctification. And because the thing was tied up in the tissue paper and ribbons of unctuous words like "consecration," "devotion," "saintly," "sanctified," and the like, they feel urged to use every opportunity to "stress," as they put it, the matter of holiness and a sanctified life of Christian service. The result is an unhealthy, morbid kind of Christianity, a bit sickening to sound and healthy Christians. Faith loses its balance under this one-sided pressure. Some of the advocates of this way of preaching good works gravitate pretty close to hypocrisy, which dearly loves an unctuous tone. Since this is our text on good works these things must be said in warning. They are needed!

Never, never, never preach good works, no matter what the text or occasion, without showing beyond all question that actual good works acceptable in the sight of God are absolutely and altogether, from inception to completion, the natural and inevitable outgrowth of sound, healthy faith in Christ and his atonement, the true faith which actually justifies and did justify before ever a good work had a chance to grow. The root decides the fruit, not the fruit the root, and the fruit does not

decide itself apart from the root. The root produces the fruit, not the fruit the root; nor does the fruit produce itself apart from the root. The root increases the fruit, and never does the fruit increase the root, or increase itself apart from the root (say by a kind of self-propagation). Therefore never say fruit, without properly saying root. And be no such fool as to expect and demand fruit beyond the strength and capacity of the root your preaching has produced. What can you expect from a sickly little tree? Shaking and again shaking it will never add to the fruit it bears. Make it grow healthy and strong, and there will be no vain shaking. —

One might be inclined to fall for the obvious in this text, and simply cut it in two for the outline:

The Good Works that Really Please the Lord.

- I. *Not those that men set up themselves*, such as the ancient Jewish fasting during the exile.
- II. *Only those that the Lord himself requires*, such as he set before the returned Jewish exiles.

But unless the preacher puts far more into this kind of outline than it shows on the surface, he had better not use such a division. He must show fully and clearly that all self-invented observances, even when otherwise they might be permitted, are *not* genuine products, marks, and fruits of faith; and on the other hand he must show that the works mentioned in the text *are* such products, for they involve the heart and have faith as their root. — These essential points in preaching on good works are brought out directly in an outline like this:

The Lord Himself Shows us how to Test our Good Works.

- I. *Are they done unto him?*
- II. *Are they done from the heart?*

They are done unto him when faith in him, his Word, grace, etc., bring them forth; not our own ideas. When, therefore, they are works which the Lord himself has prescribed; not deeds of our own choosing. When their one aim is by faith to glorify the Lord and the grace we have received from him. — The heart test is valuable in the same way. Judgment, mercy and compassions v. 9, are matters of the new heart, reborn by faith. Even the most just and kindly deeds outwardly are mere chaff without such a heart. So also v. 10-b points to a new heart animated by faith. The Lord always looks at the heart. —

When the Jews Asked about Keeping Fasts.

- I. *The Lord missed the evidence of faith;*
- II. *And feared for the real fruits of faith.*

These Jews seemed so ready to keep outward religious observances, even such as the Lord had not required, and might thus do only in an outward way the works named by the Lord. The Jews seemed to think that by the things they did in the Lord's name they could earn the Lord's favor and gifts. They did not understand that faith in the Lord's grace, Word, etc., is the absolute essential in all that we do to please the Lord. — No wonder the Lord corrected them sharply. Was faith really renewing their hearts and filling them with love, v. 10-b, the mother of real good works? Was faith in the Lord's judgment, mercy, and compassions really reflecting in their hearts, and then in their lives, the corresponding love of right and truth, the corresponding mercy and compassions? The Lord had his fears.

Good Works and the Godly Life.

- I. *The good works that hollow out the godly life, and make it a mere shell, a hollow nut, a worthless imitation.*
- II. *The good works that round out the godly life, show that it is a godly life (evidence); display its power and beauty (marks); deck and adorn it in God's sight (like the fruit adorns the tree).*

What Good has the Lord of our Good Works?

- I. *None whatever.* He who is the Lord of hosts, who is all-perfect, all-blessed, cannot be given a thing by all the best and holiest good works in the world, such as are mentioned in v. 8-10, to say nothing of sham works like those referred to in v. 6-7. Learn this mighty truth. We need it in all our good works.
- II. *A great deal.* He is greatly pleased to see by our good works that his saving Word and grace have actually changed our hearts and made them new. He is greatly delighted to see his justice and mercy reflected in our lives as his true children, even as his joy is to make us at last perfectly like him.

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ps. 50, 14-23

The subject of this text is *true worship*, one of the inevitable and certainly important marks of the Godly Life. This subject is treated both positively and negatively. We are emphatically told in what true worship consists, and its nature is made plain by contrasting it with spurious and empty worship. It is a good arrangement to let this text on worship follow the one on good works, for the two belong together.

Ours is the first Psalm composed by the older Asaph who lived in David's time. It is cast into highly dramatic form, which deserves to be noted in our study. There is first a grand Theophany, v. 1-3; the mighty God and Lord appears in order to judge in a trial. There is secondly, v. 4-6, the arranging of the court scene as the participants are called together. With the court complete, the heavens and the earth and God's saints all gathered together in his presence, God solemnly testifies against Israel, v. 7-15, and with the voice of judgment confronts the wicked, v. 16-23. The grandeur of the entire conception is overwhelming. For in that court scene the underlying thought is that all the heavens, the whole earth, and the saints of God, all in one mighty accord will support the testimony and the indictment which "the mighty God, even the Lord" solemnly brings as "Judge," v. 6, against Israel, and in condemnation of the wicked in Israel. Our text takes in only v. 14-23, the essential portion of the closing words correcting Israel, and the indictment of the wicked in her midst.

14. **Offer unto God thanksgiving;
and pay thy vows unto the most High.**
15. **And call upon me in the day of trouble:
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify
me.**

In order to understand what God, the divine Witness against Israel, means by these corrective statements we must note what precedes in v. 8-13. God is driving home the fact that as far as he is concerned he needs none of the sacrifices Israel has been offering to him. If he had any need of these he would not wait on Israel to supply them, for the cattle on a thousand hills are his and the fowls of the mountains, all in vast numbers. If God were actually hungry he would not need to tell Israel; for the world and its fulness are his. But does anyone in Israel really think that God eats the flesh of bulls and drinks the blood of goats? This is the negative side of God's testimony. The sum is: God is not profited by any animal sacrifice — let no Israelite think it. Note that God says nothing further. He does not explain why Israel was to offer animal sacrifices, what purpose these ceremonial acts really were to have. Nor dare we carry into these verses any such explanations. — Now over against this negative testimony God sets the positive testimony in the form of injunctions. It should be self-evident that the positive must correspond exactly to the negative. As far as God is concerned what he wants for himself and on his part is no animal sacrifice at all, but the true worship of his people which consists of petitions, and following these thanksgiving and glorification. This is the true contrast. It is a grave deflection of the thought in God's testimony to alter the contrast, as if God said: I do not want *your kind* of sacrifices, but a *different kind*; I do not want mere *formal* sacrifices, but sacrifices *filled with thankfulness*. — **Offer unto God**

thanksgiving is exactly what the Hebrew says. *Zabach* means "slaughter," and then "offer"; and *thodah* "praise" or "thanks." Koenig translates in our passage: "thanks" and adds that combined with this verb the term signifies "praise-offering." The verb is used because of the preceding context which speaks of sacrificing animals. To press the verb here in the sense of actual slaughter, so that the injunction would mean animal sacrifices for thanksgiving, is to lose the very point which God stresses, namely that he eats no flesh and drinks no blood, but does most earnestly desire the praise and thanks of his people. — That this is correct the parallel clause makes still plainer: **and pay thy vows unto the most High**, in which the piel *shallem* combined with *neder* means to fulfill a vow. The expression is used of settling in full any debt, and thus also one incurred by a vow, i. e. promise made to God. It is impossible to make this mean here that God asks of the Israelites to pay him in full any animal sacrifices they may have pledged him. For nowhere is there any hint that any bloody sacrifice had been withheld from God; on the contrary, God had testified v. 8: "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me"; which Delitzsch renders: "and thy burnt offerings are before me continually." Israel had paid in full all animal sacrifices. But the vows which Israel had made in accepting God's covenant, the promises to God on various occasions when God took Israel to task, these Israel had not paid up in full. Note, too, that both Hebrew lines are addressed to Israel as a whole, and not individual and separate Israelites who had been remiss in animal sacrifices. Israel as a people owed God thanks and praise; Israel had pledged herself to render such true worship, but had put God off with only a mass of bloody sacrifices. As between the two, God wants only the latter. This and the following verse are in line with

other expressions in the Psalms, Prov. 21, 3, and clear passages in the prophets, which plainly turn from everything ceremonial to the "reasonable service," Rom. 12, 1, and "the worship in spirit and in truth," John 4, 23, desired by the Father in the New Testament era. When used as a title and without the article *Elyon* signifies **The Highest**. It is highly expressive here, for who would dare to withhold from "The Highest," from God over all, anything that had been solemnly pledged unto him? — While the text does not deal with the purpose for which God had arranged bloody sacrifices in the old covenant, we may nevertheless add here that they were on Israel's own account, to teach by act the doctrine of substitution and of blood atonement, and in various ways to typify the bloody sacrifice of Christ; never on God's account, as though he feasted on such sacrifices — a pagan idea, — or in any way needed them for himself. As acts of true worship all such sacrifices became utterly empty the moment they were performed merely outwardly as rites, without the spiritual motives back of them.

V. 15 is one of the evangelical gems in the Old Testament, as beautiful as any similar word in the New Testament. Spurgeon writes: "Who shall say that Old Testament saints did not know the Gospel? Its very spirit and essence breathes like frankincense all around this holy Psalm." And again: "Is it an offering to ask an alms of heaven? It is even so." In this verse all thought of animal sacrifices is far removed, and only the worship in spirit and in truth placed before us. God had spoken of thanks due him and pledges made to him, and now explains both more fully. **And call upon me in the day of trouble**, means call on me for help and deliverance. *Tsarrah* is the German *Drangsal*, when one is closely beset, hard pressed. "The day of trouble" is quite broad, for it refers to all trouble, whether bodily or spiritual. "The

eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry," Ps. 34, 15, as if he were listening to hear it. Our crying for help to the Lord in distress is the sweetest music he can hear from us, for it always indicates that now we are really ready to receive his help. — Against this bidding to cry to God is put one Hebrew word, and without a connective, to make it stand out more sharply: *'achallets^eka*, the fut. piel from *chalats*, **I will deliver thee**, really: "I will tear thee out" of thy tight place. This is a promise to true prayer just as clear and full as Christ's own when he tells us to knock, and it shall be opened unto us, to seek, and we shall find; compare also the other New Testament promises. Yet in this promise the Highest remains supreme, and is not made subject to our faulty ideas; he in his own way and in his own good time, according to his love and wisdom will effect this drawing of us out of trouble. — Now follows another single Hebrew word: *uth^ekabb^edeni*, the piel of *kabed*, **and thou shalt glorify me**. *Kabed* starts with the idea of being weighty, then advances to the idea of being influential, and in the piel by adding the causative idea arrives at the meaning "to honor" or glorify. No man can add a particle to the supreme glory of God. We glorify God only when we recognize his supreme, infinite attributes, his great, blessed, glorious acts, his gifts and benefactions, and acknowledge them "with heart and hand and voices." Now God will be glorified in us no matter whether *we* glorify him or not. That means that God who deals, and necessarily must deal, with us as his creatures is bound to show in that dealing some of his great attributes, and the moment he does so his glory shines forth. When he finally judges the wicked who scorned his grace and help his glory will shine forth, even as St. Paul shows in Rom. 3, 5 etc. Not for himself, but for our sakes God wants us to glorify him, namely that we, recognizing our great need and his super-

abundant help, ourselves see his glorious attributes and ways and worship him with praise and honor. For his help in itself is a glorious thing (objectively), and as a matter of truth and reality should be so seen and praised of us (subjectively). It is a purpose of our creation and existence to catch and reflect thus, both objectively and subjectively, both by receiving and by returning, some of the rays of God's glory. Blessed are they who do it subjectively with all their mind, heart, and soul! So this is the substance and inwardness of all true worship of God: first, from our emptiness and need to call upon him in petition; secondly, from his help and deliverance to thank and glorify him. And all forms of worship which presume actually to give something to God, as though he needed it or were benefited by it, is spurious, false, a lying thing, a silly effort to detract from his glory, an abomination from which he is bound to turn away. — Now God as the great Witness who has called the vast court of heaven and earth together, something like he will do at the last great day, pronounces his witness against the wicked.

16. **But unto the wicked God saith,
What hast thou to do to declare my statutes,
or *that* thou shouldest take my covenant
in thy mouth?**
17. **Seeing thou hatest instruction,
and castest my word behind thee:**
18. **When thou sawest a thief, then thou
consentedst with him,
and hast been partaker with adulterers.**
19. **Thou givest thy mouth to evil,
and thy tongue frameth deceit.**
20. **Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy
brother;
thou slanderest thine own mother's son.**

21. **These things hast thou done, and I kept silence;**
thou thoughtest that I was altogether
such an one as thyself:
but I will reprove thee, and set them in
order before thine eyes.
22. **Now consider this, ye that forget God,**
lest I tear you in pieces, and there be
none to deliver.

In v. 7-15 the divine Witness testified against those who offered the forms of worship without the true heart substance. In v. 16-22 the great Witness addresses those who offer the forms of worship as a cloak for their wickedness. They are addressed as **the wicked**, "yet that forget God," and their wickedness is fully described in God's indictment. — Their sin consists not merely in doing wicked deeds, but in adding thereto, as if the thing were perfectly proper and right, the worship of God. **What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?** what business is it of thine? Literally: "What to thee to recount my statutes?" *Chuqqim* are things engraved, hence fixed and established, and here refer to all God's covenant arrangements, namely the entire form of service plus the regulations for the daily life. It seems these men knew all these arrangements and regulations quite perfectly, and prided themselves on their ability to recount them, what each one of them embraced and how it was to be carried out. — The synonymous clause goes deeper: **or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?** "and takest my covenant in thy mouth?" to talk about and discuss and in particular to profess adherence to it, to claim its blessings. Note well, God calls it **my covenant**. For when he made it with Abraham and renewed it with Israel it was always a gift from God, never a mutual compact entered in by equals. Compare the full dis-

cussion on *berith* in connection with Jer. 31, 31 for The First Sunday in Advent. In the present connection the possessive "my" is especially weighty. This covenant is God's property and thus sacred. Yet these men whose mouth is given to evil and whose tongue frames deceit, v. 19, take into their wicked mouth this holy covenant of God. God is outraged by this presumption. It is a horrible defilement for these men to touch his covenant with their tongues. That covenant itself and any of the fixed provisions of it is sacred unto God — let no man desecrate it. Note that "statutes" here cannot mean law commandments, for the law came in 430 years later than the covenant.

The copulative *v^e* adds a subordinate clause: **Seeing thou hatest instruction, *mosar***, "discipline," warning, or correction, here that connected with the covenant to make men walk as members of the covenant in its holy discipline. *Mosar* refers to the moral side of the covenant which these men "hated" or disregarded. — A synonymous line adds: **and castest my words behind thee**, instead of setting them before thy eyes where thou couldst see and regard them, preferring to look at them with thy back. *D^ebarim* is broader than *mosar*, though it has the same general sense. The whole question, v. 16-17, answers itself. It would be better to repudiate the whole covenant, than to pretend adherence to it, be expert in its provisions, while disregarding the moral discipline connected with it, by flagrant violation.

God makes no mere blanket charge, but specifies his indictment. The singular "thou" is used from v. 16-21, in order to make this testimony highly personal, and to drive it home. **When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst with him, *thirets***, not from *ruts*, "to run" (Luther); but from *ratsah*, here construed with '*im*, instead of the usual *b^e*, "hast pleasure in him," or makest common cause with him. The charge here is not stealing, but failure to rebuke steal-

ing and to separate from thieves. To see a sin and not to feel indignant about it as an insult to God, is a violation of the divine covenant, though one observe its outward forms. It is the same thing in the new covenant. — Another commandment is taken up: **and hast been partaker with adulterers**, “thy portion is with them,” thou art content in their company, their sin does not make them distasteful to thee. What is charged here is moral bluntness and deadness. When faith and true spiritual worship decline in the church of the new covenant sins begin to lift their heads among the members. Then even those who are not directly guilty go on in the company of those who are guilty, and in the same way, without moral revulsion, fellowship such sinners outside of the church. Membership in the church and the forms of worship are retained, but these associations eat the heart out of this connection and worship. Spurgeon comments: “We may do this by smiling at unchaste jests, listening to indelicate expressions, and conniving at licentious behavior in our presence; and if we thus act, how dare we preach, or lead public prayer, or wear the Christian name?” In our day he might have added a word on the adulterous movies and their frequenters.

V. 19 continues the specific charges: **Thou givest thy mouth to evil**, *shalach, freien Lauf lassen* (Koenig), “to let the mouth run loose,” so that it speaks evil things. Here there is not merely connection with other men’s sins, but an advance into sin itself. These men themselves hesitated to steal or commit adultery, because there were penalties attached; but they felt free to indulge in the sins of the mouth, no civil penalties being attached to them. Spurgeon: “A man’s health is readily judged by his tongue. A foul mouth, a foul heart. Some slander as often as they breathe, and yet are great upholders of the church, and great sticklers for holiness.” — The evil to which the mouth is given is specified more

closely: **and thy tongue frameth deceit**, *thatsmid*, the *hiphil* from *tsamad*: "allows itself to be connected with deceit"; and *mirmah* is "deceit" in the sense of evil plans or schemes, *betruegerische Plaene anzetteln*. What an evil diligence of the tongue to keep connecting it with hurtful scheming!—This disposition to slander strikes even the nearest relatives: **Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.** To such depths the slanderer descends, running counter even to nature. The brother is here called "thine own mother's son" in order to make it plain that "brother" is not meant in the national, but in the full family sense. *Dophi*, which occurs only here, means "trust," and is translated in a modified sense with *nathan*: "thou slanderest," literally: "givest off slander against." So much is made of the sins of the tongue, not only because they are rife, but also because the man who thus uses his mouth for all sorts of evil presumes to take God's own covenant in his mouth, claiming adherence to it by his hollow profession.

After the full indictment comes what we may very properly call God's judicial verdict. It is not yet a final verdict of condemnation, as the admonition attached to it in v. 22 shows. But it is certainly a mighty warning when we think of the supreme court in which it is issued. **These things hast thou done** is like the summary verdict: Guilty! The addition: **and I kept silence**, using the consecutive perfect, cannot mean: "and am I to keep silence?" God means simply to state the fact that thus far he has been silent, and in his patience and longsuffering allowed the hypocritical worshipper to go on. God had indeed given his Word, there was no silence in that respect. So now when church members sin; the Word is there and speaks to them. God has even appointed preachers do din his Word into the ears of these unspiritual worshippers. But beyond that God does not interfere

perhaps for many a day, namely by some sort of punishment. His forbearance would give men time to repent, and itself calls for repentance. Yet when flagrantly abused God's forbearing silence turns to the silence of abandonment, simply letting the sinner run deeper into his evil course and ripen unto judgment. — The sinner God is here judging is thus abusing God's silence and forbearance: **thou thoughtest that I was altogether as thyself.** The piel of *damah*, namely *dimmitha*, means "to consider," conclude, think; and "I was altogether" translates the added infinitive absolute, which however is in the construct, *h'yoth 'ehyeh*, a fine point for the grammarians. God is uncovering what is at the bottom of the sinner's action. Because he does not see, understand, and care, he concludes tacitly that God, too, does not know or care. Because he is satisfied he dreams God is satisfied too, especially since he is professing adherence to the covenant and is expert on its outward provisions. Instead of bringing his own judgments up to the level of God's, whose Word he has, he disregards that Word, and drags God and his judgment down to his own debased level. It is a fact, men in their sinning, even when they should know better, lower God to their own level. That makes them easy in their minds. — The silence of God, so badly misunderstood, shall end. The great Witness announces: **I will reprove thee.** The hiphil of *yakach* may mean "to fault" someone, as well as "to discipline" him, chastise him. Either would fit well here. — How God will do this the final line of the verse states: **and set them in order before thine eyes**, literally "set them in a row" etc., so that all the delusion will be dispelled. When and by what means God will do this he does not say. It is a wondrous grace if he does this, as here in this Psalm, while repentance is still possible. But it will be done without fail in the final judgment.

The indictment is complete. That it is meant in great mercy is shown by the admonition with which it closes: **Now consider this, ye that forget God.** The verb, the hiphil from *bin*, Germ. *merken*, "heed" or note, is emphasized by adding *na'*: "do heed," or some similar equivalent. "Ye that forget God" is really "ye forgetters of God." They are so called after their lives and hearts are laid bare by the great Witness who will be their final Judge. They have forgotten him by disregarding the real requirements of his covenant, and not heeding his plain Word, following their own perversions, and making his worship a sham. — The admonition is intensified by a threatening warning: **lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.** Koenig translates *taraph* here with *vertilgen*, "wipe out," though the figurative "rend in pieces," used of a lion, seems more expressive. The reference is to the final judgment, hence the addition "none to deliver," to rescue or pull you out (*natsal*).

Some begin the epilog of the Psalm with v. 22, but this verse seems to belong to the indictment of the wicked forgetters of God, v. 16 etc. For just as the testimony against the formal worshippers, v. 7 etc., has a hortatory conclusion in v. 14-15, so one expects a corresponding conclusion to the testimony against the wicked, v. 16 etc., and we have this conclusion in v. 22. — V. 23 very plainly is added as the conclusion or epilog of the entire Psalm. For the first line quite evidently refers back to the formal worshippers, and is an echo of v. 14-15; while the second line of v. 23 just as plainly refers to the wicked worshippers and tells them to change their lives. — **Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me**, repeats in the first clause the two significant terms used in V. 14 *zabach* and *thodah*, and we might translate the same: "Whoso offereth thanksgiving." This is the *thodah* asked for in v. 14, true praise-offering. In the main verb: "glorifieth me," we have a repetition from v. 15: "and

thou shalt glorify me." So this epilog summarizes first of all v. 14-15. — Instead of summarizing in the same way v. 22, Asaph used a free form. V. 22 ended up the witness against the wicked by a threatening warning, thus a negative thought. In the epilog, the final line of v. 23, this negative is given a positive counterpart. Instead of "tear you in pieces" Asaph writes: "will I show the salvation of God." So the true epilog of the Psalm is v. 23. — **And to him that ordereth his conversation** aright, causes linguistic trouble. *V^esam derek* is rendered: "that disposeth (his) way," in the margin, giving practically the same sense, *sam* from *sim-sum*. The objection is raised that *sam derek* can only mean: "he makes a way." But if we accept this the concluding words do not apply: "I will let him pasture God's salvation," 'ar'ennu, from *ra'ah* with *b^e*, "feed on" or "graze," like a sheep. Kessler gives the matter up. Others follow Delitzsch: "and makes a way, on which I will show him God's salvation," though "on which" is not in the text. We leave the question to the learned Hebraists. The sense is clear enough for the preacher as given in the English margin: "to him that disposeth his way" etc. The wicked follow a wrong way. They must "set their way," in order to harmonize it with the covenant they profess. Then the threat will not strike them, but they will enjoy in peace, unharmed by judgment, "God's salvation" in that blessed covenant, even as a sheep grazes in peace on the pastures to which its shepherd has led it.

SUGGESTIONS

Recalling the old gospel for this Sunday one might incline to point our Old Testament text in the same direction. Only one of the ten lepers healed by Christ returned to thank him, Luke 17, 11-19. Our text begins: "Offer to God *thanksgiving*." The focal point can thus be made thanksgiving.

Moreover in both texts there is a strong negative to serve as a background for true gratitude; in the old gospel nine men proved ungrateful, and in our text there is mere formal worship without thankfulness, and even without obedience. So Kessler outlines: **Thank the Lord!** I. Ill thanks; II. Right thanks. A treatment like this would not be out of place. Only it would narrow down the text considerably, and as the homileticians put it: it would not exhaust the text. And, after all, our treatment of a text should not be decided by what some other text teaches, but by our own text itself. — Our text is broader than the old gospel text. We see that at once when we view the whole Psalm from which our text is taken, especially its grand frame-work, the exalted court scene which it pictures with the divine Witness who comes and shall not keep silence, v. 3. This breadth the sermon ought to reflect. Heubner has caught its great sweep when he outlines: **The Right Calling upon God.** I. In what it consists; II. What should prompt us to it; III. How we may attain it. Yet this is a mere rough sketch, what with its categories and all, suitable only for the study when the preacher begins laying out his sermon, and altogether too immature for the pulpit. A well-to-do congregation is not content to worship in a church with walls and ceiling showing rough brick and timbers, although these are all right in their proper places; it wants the walls plastered, the ceiling finished, and both of them properly decorated. So also the sermon; walls and timbers in their places, but both of them perfectly finished, and if possible beautifully decorated. — F. G. Alpers in *Sermon Sketches on Old Testament Texts* also strikes the full thought of the text when he outlines: **God's Challenge to Religious Hypocrites.** I. A rebuke; II. A warning; III. An admonition. However, the idea of "challenge" is not split by the three nouns in the division. — Karl Gerok in his three volumes of sermons on the Psalms treats the whole Psalm in a striking way, yet unfolding its actual contents: **The Lord's Mighty Sermon Against False Worship.** We behold I. How the preacher ascends the pulpit; II. How he preaches against false worship. In part one we are shown first the preacher, then his pulpit, and after that the voice with which he preaches. In part two we are warned against, firstly, the dead hand-worship, which should be shut out by true heart-worship; and secondly, against hypocritical lip-worship, which again should be shut out by true life-worship. But Gerok should not have superimposed on the Psalm the imagery of a church service, with its preacher, hearers, and sermon, which resulted in making his first part only a sort of preface, not a true part of the sermon.

He should have been satisfied with the far grander imagery of Asaph, that of a court scene composed of the universe with God laying down his witness before it, the whole a prelude to the final judgment. And the fact is, that the more one studies and meditates on this Psalm the more he is enthralled by this imagery and drawn to use the entire Psalm for his text, instead of only the section selected for us.

These efforts of various preachers are helpful in coaching us. The general subject of our text is: *the true worship* which God alone can accept, as over against *the spurious worship* which men offer him. We may add that this true worship is always a mark of the Godly Life, and in this series of texts is intended to be presented as such a mark. Now the text naturally splits in two in this way: first, the true worship is placed over against the false (positive — negative); and, of course, we may so skeletonize, which will not be quite analytically, because the true worship is presented in v. 14-15 plus v. 23, and the false by the remaining verses. In the second place, a natural split will take v. 14-15 plus v. 23-a as belonging together, and also v. 16-22 plus v. 23-b as belonging together. This divides on the two main features which God here requires in true worship, namely, first worship in which *the heart* honors him by calling upon him, receiving his help, and rendering him due praise and honor; and secondly worship in which *the life* accords with his covenant, reflecting the power of his salvation by opposing and casting off all sin. Both types of analysis ought to make good sermons. We may note, however, that in regard to the heart our text omits the negative specifications contained in v. 7-13, while it includes for the life the negative specifications in v. 16-22. How about this disparity, for such it is? We would say, do one of two things: either practically take in v. 7-13; or treat v. 16-22 lightly. It seems to the author, that when this text was chosen this disparity was not noted; or those who chose it meant to have the preacher stress only v. 14-15 plus v. 23. — So let us outline as follows: —

The True Worship Which Always Marks the Godly Life.

- I. *It consists of genuine praise and thanksgiving.* That kind of praise, etc., has back of it a full recognition of *our great need*: the soul's need of salvation and grace; the life's need of help in trouble and distress. — It has back of it the personal experience of God's salvation and covenant grace, and of God's deliverance in times of distress. — And so it is filled with glori-

fication of God, his salvation, covenant, deliverance (all terms found in the text), and with genuine thanksgiving with heart and hand and voice.

- II. *It is the genuine reflection of godliness and obedience.* It is the worship which grows out of our being in God's covenant (faith), and not merely talking about it and outwardly adhering to it. — Out of our appropriation of the saving power of the covenant lifting us into a new life. — Thus true worship is part of our new life and reflects its holy character, and is impossible for those who stay in the old life, and love its sinful ways.

In a treatment like this v. 16-22 is treated only in a minor way. —

What is wrong with so much of the worship men offer to God? Two things: 1) form without substance; it is hollow; 2) holy words covering unholy deeds; it is self-contradictory. God has laid down his witness before heaven and earth against both.

God's Witness Against All Spurious Worship.

He solemnly testifies before all heaven and earth that he will not accept:

- I. *Fine offerings in place of true thanksgiving.*
- II. *Holy words coupled with unholy living.*

Here v. 7-13 is utilized equally with v. 16-22. And in each part, after sketching the negative, namely, the spurious form of worship, the positive, or the genuine form is presented, and the preacher must do the latter with such fulness as to avoid a general negative effect in his sermon.

Sketch the frame-work of the Psalm, the tremendous court scene, with God as the supreme Witness, and this court scene as the preliminary to the final court scene at the last judgment when this supreme Witness now speaking in warning will speak as the supreme Judge in final judgment.

The Supreme Witness, and His Testimony Concerning Those That Worship Him.

- I. *He testifies concerning all spurious worship.*
- II. *He testifies concerning the only genuine worship.*
- III. *He testifies now that we may not be judged and rejected hereafter.*

In connection with this text remember the fallacy of earnestness and sincerity in worship, such as even the heathen manifest, without the truth of God behind it. Sincerity in wrong worship never makes it acceptable. Treat the false lodge worship, in which men engage who reject the covenant of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the blood covenant of Christ crucified, the doctrines which make up that covenant, the requirements of Christian life which center in that covenant; and though they do all this think they are in covenant with God and will be received when they worship him. Note all through that "my covenant," "my statutes," v. 16, and "the salvation of God," v. 23, are meant in their full biblical sense, and therefore exclude all false doctrines, reasonings of men, and religious ideas and practices connected with either or with both. Our text, rightly handled, will produce no small effect upon those who come to worship in our churches and profess day by day to be true worshippers of Almighty, All-Holy, All-Merciful God. — Finally let us add this:

The Thanksgiving of True Worship.

- I. Thanksgiving for his salvation.*
- II. Thanksgiving in his covenant.*
- III. Thanksgiving for his deliverance.*

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 Kings 17, 8-16

Luke 4, 25-27 makes it quite plain that ours is a text on the widow of Sarepta, and not one on Elijah, i. e. that the widow's faith and trust is the point of the text, and not anything that Elijah did or that he received. We have had our special text on faith, in 2 Kgs. 5, 1-19, for The Third Sunday after Epiphany. There, too, we met a Gentile, namely Naaman, who at first was not yet a believer in Jehovah, the text showing us how he came to faith. In our present text the widow is already a believer and Elijah is sent to her on that account. Our text allows us to see one of the marks or characteristics of her faith, namely her reliance on the Lord's providence. She shows us *the absence of care* or worry in faith; for she is ready, with her son, to die of starvation, since this seems to be the Lord's will; and again, when the prophet comes and bids her divide her last morsel with him, she does that without a murmur, and trusts the promise of the prophet that in a miraculous way her little store of meal and oil would hold out until the famine should come to an end. One of the marks of true faith is this reliance on God's providence and the dismissal of care and worry, casting all care upon him who careth for us. — How the famine came upon the country we are told in the first verse of our chapter, also how for a considerable time Elijah was fed at the brook Cherith by the ravens. When the brook dried up because of the long cessation of rain a new refuge had to be provided by the Lord.

And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 9. Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which *belongeth* to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. 10. So he arose and went to Zarephath . . .

Examples of heroic faith in the Scriptures, as well as in church history, often fail to stir our hearers, who are inclined to excuse themselves that they cannot hope to vie with such heroes, because they are all simple people without exceptional gifts and callings. So the account of Elijah's absolute dependence upon the Lord during the famine of three years in Israel leaves many of our people cold; for Elijah was one of the greatest of the prophets, in a class far beyond such people as we are. It is for this reason that the Lord has put other examples of great faith into the Scriptures, such as that of the lone widow at Sarepta, that other widow casting her two mites into the Temple treasury, and the Syro-Phenecian woman who pleaded till she was heard and whose faith Jesus himself called great. When our hearers see these examples of faith, no excuse is possible. They must admit, such faith should be theirs too. — When the shelter at the brook Cherith could no longer be used for Elijah the Lord directed him to a new refuge. How **the word of the Lord came** to Elijah we are not told, since the fact alone here concerns us. — Yet "the word" is set down here exactly as the prophet received it: **Arise, get thee to Zarephath, etc.** *Kum* and *lek* (from *halak*) are both imperatives. Elijah was to go from the brook that emptied into the Jordan on the eastern boundary of the land, way across the country to the far northwest into Phenecia, for the town designated belonged to Zidon and lay eight miles north of it on the Mediterranean Sea. It was once a flourishing city; ruined columns, slabs, sarcophagi are found, and the old crusaders built a chapel on the supposed

site of the widow's house. We cannot tell whether the brook Cherith flowed into the Jordan from the west or from the east, and thus whether the first refuge of Elijah was in King Ahab's domain or safely outside of it. Zarephath certainly was beyond his reach. **And dwell there** means an indefinite stay. — The Lord had made strange provision for his faithful prophet; no wonder, he begins his explanation with **behold!** Instead of choosing a person of means to feed and shelter Elijah as a guest during the remainder of the famine, the Lord chooses a widow on the verge of starvation: **I have commanded a widow woman to sustain thee.** The verb *tsavah* here means "to appoint." The Lord had not communicated supernaturally with this "widowed woman," he had in his counsel appointed her "to sustain thee," to provide for thee, *kul*, from which the pilpel is *kilkel*, and thus the form here used yith *l*, namely *l^ekalkelka*. It is altogether typical of the Lord to use a person like this woman for the purpose in hand. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Cor. 2, 27-29. Reason would consider it the height of folly to select a poor, starving woman with a starving child, about to eat her last mouthful of food, to feed the prophet for months to come during a famine that had already reached an acute stage and was to become far worse still. The trouble is, reason sees only the 200 pennies like Philip, and the five available barley loaves and two small fishes like Andrew, John 6, 7-9, and does not see and reckon with the Lord. Here in Zarephath was a case of "things which are not." The Lord, and he alone, was sustaining his prophet; as he had used the ravens at the brook

Cherith, so he would now use this starving and destitute widow. So Elijah **arose and went to Zarephath.**

10. . . . **And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman *was* there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.** 11. **And as she was going to fetch *it*, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand.** 12. **And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I *am* gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.**

Elijah arrives at his destination, and now again **behold**, the exclamation written to draw our attention. How was the prophet to find the hostess the Lord had appointed for him? He had not the least sign to guide him. "A widowed woman" was no mark for identification, for we do not know that widowed women in that Gentile city wore any garb or mark of widowhood to distinguish them from other women. Elijah was somewhat in the position of Eliezer, who was to bring a bride for Isaac and had no idea who the right woman would be. The prophet knew that the Lord who had directed him would certainly also guide him to the appointed person. — And right here she was, before Elijah had even entered the city gate. Behold there, **the widow woman**, however, does not mean that Elijah at once recognized her as his future hostess; for the designation only repeats from v. 9 and informs us, the readers, not Elijah. The piel participle shows what she was engaged in, namely **gathering of sticks**, pieces of wood for a fire. That already marked her as a poor person; and we may well presume that her dress and her starved look even

more plainly spoke of her great poverty. Menken has these excellent observations: "To many another, even godly and highly gifted, man the thought would hardly have occurred that this poor woman along the roadside was the person selected by God for the sustenance of his prophet during the famine. Such a man would have required another special revelation in order to think that, namely: Behold, this is she! But that is the astonishing greatness in Elijah that he did not need this revelation. He was, if I may use the expression, very much alike to God in his way of thinking, and so in every particular circumstance in his life truth would enlighten him like a brilliant flash. Accordingly, he at once judges that mayhap a noble soul dwelt under the poor garb, a soul that had found grace with God. Indeed, here might be a refined heart, frightened, crushed in suffering, but withal full of living desire for God and thirsting for the knowledge of truth and therefore especially worthy of God's particular grace and help. And it would be still greater, if Elijah had at once caught and grasped the entire will of God, the hidden loving counsel of his heart in regard to this widow, and had thought within himself: It may be that thou hast been sent here to serve and provide rather than to be served and provided for. Possibly thou art to provide comfort and help for this soul, who is perhaps deeply afflicted in her poverty. Is it for this reason that she had to meet thee at once at thy entering the city? O how worthy of God would that be, whose eyes look through all lands, and always do more than men understand or hope." One thing is very certain, the hand of God's providence is here plainly revealed, and we do well to see it for the stimulation of our faith. This widow had, no doubt, prayed most fervently, especially also for her child, and no help had appeared. The sky was as brazen as before, the earth dustier day by day, and food prices, already out of reach, rising still higher.

She had sold or pawned the last piece; there was no money, no food beyond that last bit of meal and oil. That God was sending her a great prophet all the way from the Jordan — to have told her that would have sounded more fanciful than a fairy-tale. That God would time the prophet's arrival with that day and hour when she expected to go out and gather faggots for the last time in her life — to have added that would have seemed worse than romancing and spinning fairy tales. And yet it was literally true — there, right before her eyes, was the prophet after his long journey. Note, that here the curtain is withdrawn so that we can see God's hand manipulating everything so wondrously. Remember, when the curtain is down his hand operates in identically the same way, only he has millions of ways at the command of his wisdom and love.

Elijah, who knew God's ways so well, surmised that this poverty-stricken woman was God's choice, and at once tests out his surmise. He asks her for a drink. **Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.** It sounds as if the woman's house was quite close at hand, outside of the city gates, so that she had only a little ways to go. Elijah was thirsty from his journey. The *na* with *q^echi* is like our word "please" in requests. The imperative of *laqach* is *qach*, less frequently *l^eqach*, here the feminine *q^echi*. We say "in a vessel," while the Hebrew says "in *the* vessel," the one used for the purpose. The English idiom, however, goes much farther, for we would say: "Please bring me a little cup of water" etc. Elijah was asking a little favor. — The woman at once repented. She probably saw that the traveler was dusty and thirsty from travel. This was preliminary on Elijah's part. **And as she was going to fetch it, *thelek*, from *halak*,** he added the final part of the test: **Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand,** here *liqchi*, the stronger feminine im-

perative instead of *q^echi* as in v. 10. *Phath* is "morsel" or "bite," here of *lechem*, "bread." It was natural for a traveler to be both thirsty and hungry. But to ask for bread, even for a bite, in famine time was much more than asking for a drink. Since the woman's great poverty must have been evident in her appearance, this request on Elijah's part was like searching her soul.

That soul was now bared before him. For the woman replies: **As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake.** The adjective *chay*, "living," with *Yahveh* etc. is a form of oath, and *'im* following an oath denotes a strong negation. This was a Gentile country and city; therefore this oath naming the Lord God indicates that this woman had come to the faith of Israel, and her saying "thy God," and not "my God," indicates further that she recognized the prophet, perhaps by his dress and speech, as an Israelite. Elijah now knows that the Lord had not sent him to a Gentile woman, but to a proselyte, one who had learned to know and believe in the true God away off in this heathen city, the while Ahab and the people of Israel had become proselytes of Baal and tried to eradicate the worship of Jehovah. *Yesh-li* = there is not for me, "I have not"; and *ma'og* is "something round," namely a round cake of bread baked in hot ashes. There is not even one little flat cake of that kind in the woman's house. — *Ki 'im*, "on the contrary," all that she has is **an handful of meal in a barrel**, "the fulness of a hand of flour in a jar." "Barrel" is too big for *kad*, which Luther retained from the Hebrew in his German translation. **And a little oil in a cruse** comprises her entire stock of food. The olive oil was used in cooking or baking. — While this is tragic enough, it is only the introduction, for she continues: **and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.** Not only was this all the food she

had, it was the last she could possibly get. And we discover she had a little son, which makes her simple words the more tragic. She was about to prepare their last little meal on earth — after that the still agony of starvation — mother and child — and death. The dual *shenayim* can, of course, mean exactly “two,” but here where bits of wood for a fire are meant *shenayim* means “a few,” and should have been so translated. “Behold me gathering” etc. is like our English: “You see I am just gathering” etc. The verb *‘asañ*, “to make,” used of flour and oil means “prepare” it, the more since it includes baking the cake of bread. There is something heroic in the calm statement: “that we may eat it, and die.” She took it as God’s will, and so was ready to bear it. But this says nothing of the burning prayers, the inner conflicts, the wrestling with despair that must have preceded this resolution to eat the last, and then quietly die. We often fret, worry, murmur, doubt, and even disbelieve, in the small difficulties of our lives; let us compare ourselves with this woman calmly resigned to the will of God to eat and then to die with her child! And so Elijah had his answer to his request for a bit of bread.

13. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring *it* unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. 14. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. 15. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. 16. *And* the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

That Elijah is now certain he has found the woman appointed to lodge and feed him during the

famine days is evident. For one thing Elijah knew the Lord's way — he would select just such a rich hostess for him, one who was about to put the last morsel of food into her own and her child's mouth. The Lord was keeping Elijah, not some one else. And there would be no doubt about it being wholly the Lord, and no one else. For another thing, these biblical accounts which present to us only the facts of the events they record, as in this case, allow us only to surmise what all lies beneath those facts. But something lies back of Elijah's word which the narrative does not tell. In v. 14 Elijah declares: "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel," and then quotes his very words. That means that God here made his will and promise known to the prophet in some instantaneous way that we do not know. And that is why Elijah speaks as he does in v. 13: **Fear not, etc.** She is bidden most positively to dismiss all doubts and misgivings, and to do without hesitation as she is requested: **go and do as thou hast said**, namely bake that little last flour and oil; **but make me thereof a little cake first**, namely divide it, little as it is, and bake my little portion first; **and bring it unto me.** She is asked to feed Elijah first, and to wait about preparing the rest for herself and her son: **and after make for thee and thy son.** *Mishsham* (*min* with *sham*), "thereof," means from the flour or oil; *'uggah q^e tannah* "a little cake," a little that is baked. In the last clause the Hebrew reads: "and for thee and for thy son prepare afterwards," putting into fine contrasts: "for me — and for thee and for thy son." An astounding request to this poor starving woman by an Israelite stranger! But before any wrong objections can rise in this poor widow's heart, such as the thought: Why does he not ask some richer person to give him food, when my whole little cake, after I make it, would not still a man's hunger? the prophet adds in the name of the Lord God the most astounding promise, by his very

act proclaiming himself a prophet of the Lord God to this woman.

This promise, v. 14, declares, that it is *not a last act of charity* this widow is to do, taking out of her own and her child's mouth part of her last bread and putting it into the mouth of a stranger who did not look like a starving man and who might well get food elsewhere; but *an act of faith*. She is to believe that her prayers have been heard, that the Lord God means to keep her and her son alive in a wonderful way, and that he has sent this man, his prophet, to her for this very reason. She is to do an act like that other widow in the gospel, whom some painters depict as also having a child and carrying it on her arm, when she cast in two mites, her entire living, into the Temple treasury, and by that *act of faith* cast herself and her child absolutely on the care of the Lord. An unspiritual fool once said: "Oh, she could throw those two pennies away as well as not, for they could not help her!" He might say the same of this widow at Sarepta: "She might have given the whole to Elijah, for that would not have kept her from starving!" Reason always is a big fool when it comes to faith. But faith trusts God and his Word, and thus experiences what reason never will find, smart as it seems to be. — Elijah announces: **For thus saith the LORD God of Israel**, the God whom this woman had come to believe in, of whose covenant (*Yahveh*) she knew, having entered it by faith, and of whose almighty power she knew (*Elohe Yisrael*), having heard and believed what he had done for his people. We can conclude only this, that the Spirit of God revealed this word and promise to Elijah here as he was speaking to this woman. It is missing the real point to say with Keil that the prophet was here trying by a test to find out whether this was the woman appointed by God to feed him; likewise to say with Keil merely that "he offered her comfort." He knew this was the

woman, not from any deduction or test he had made, but from the revelation God here made to him; and he offered her comfort indeed, but far more, namely the Lord's direct promise and assurance at this moment received by direct revelation, which included also Elijah himself, for now the Lord had told him also how he was to be fed during the last year or more of the drought and famine.—This is the Lord's revelation: **The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until etc.** By dividing this widow would multiply. By first making a bit of the flour and oil into a cake for the prophet, the woman would secure an indefinite and sufficient supply for months to come. All that was necessary was faith; that faith would be for her the end of all care. *Kalah*, "to be completed or done," is here translated "not waste"; there would always be more flour in the jar, every time the widow would go to it to make a new baking. *Chaser*, "to decrease," get less, run out, here translated "fail," means that the oil in the jug would never cease flowing every time the widow tilted it to make a new baking. This miracle is like the two when Christ fed the multitudes with a few flat barley cakes of bread and a few fish; the more he kept breaking off and handing out the more there was to break off.—The miraculous increase was promised to continue **until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth**, "until the day of the Lord giving rain on the face of the earth," the infinitive construct *theth*, here written *thethn* (just why has not been explained) from *nathan*, "to give." As the drought was a disciplinary affliction by the Lord, so the Lord alone would determine when it should end. It lasted three years in all; and as the last year must have been the worst, the assurance in the Lord's promise lifted the widow out of all fear, by assuring her of enough food to keep body and soul together till the drought should actually end.

V. 15 is all very simple, just telling the bare facts in Bible fashion, and not a word more: **And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah.** Did she ask any questions before she thus "went"? Did she want to know who Elijah was that he could speak so? It seems not. Her act proclaims aloud that she believed the Lord's promise sent to her so unexpectedly. That promise itself kindled her faith in it. She trusted it as what it was, the Lord's sure Word. Keil must not have considered his own words when he wrote: "She gave away the certain for the uncertain." No; she added the most certain (the Lord's promise) to the certain (her bit of flour and oil). Let us not overlook either the Lord's kindness to her faith, when she was not asked to give *all* her bit of food to Elijah in order to show her faith, but only *part* of it. But as in so many cases, the Lord arranged for no mere *lip* expression of faith, but for a *deed* expression: "she went and *did* according to" etc. The deed is the thing. There are preachers as well as hearers who preach and hear the right words, and by preaching and by hearing consent to the words, but fail to practice their words. Wrong practice in the church is equal to unbelief, no matter how strongly the preacher may voice his faith; and with the hearer it is the same.—As always God's promise proves true: **and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.** It was no elegant fare, but the starch of the flour and the fat of the oil, varied in the way the widow prepared them, fed her, her heaven-sent guest, and her son. Because of the feminine form *th'okal* the k'ri transposes "he and she," and would have us read "she and he"; but the feminine verb may be read as neuter: "there did eat" he and she etc. Just who is meant by "her house" is uncertain; some suggest friends whom she invited during these hard times. *Yamim* = "days," which often means "for a time," *eine Zeit lang*, which conventionally was also used for

about a year, whence perhaps the English margin: "a full year." — V. 16 adds in so many words that the food held out **according to the word of the LORD which he spake by Elijah**, lit.: "by the hand of," using him as his instrument as one uses a hand. Thus the poor woman who with her son expected soon to die in humble resignation to what looked like the Lord's will, was not only kept alive by the Lord's care, but was strengthened in her faith and was used to shelter and feed one of the Lord's greatest prophets.

SUGGESTIONS

"It is the nature of God to make something out of nothing. Therefore, out of him who is not yet nothing God cannot make anything. Now men make something out of something, which is altogether a useless operation. So then God receives only the abandoned; he makes well only the sick; he makes seeing only the blind; he makes alive only the dead; he makes godly only the sinners; he makes wise only the foolish. In short, he has pity only on the miserable, and gives grace only to those who are without grace. For this reason no haughty one, no holy one, no wise or righteous one can become material for God and get God's workmanship done in himself, but remains his own work and makes of himself an imitated, sham, spurious, painted saint, that is a hypocrite." — Luther.

Our text is a plain parallel to the old gospel text for this Sunday, Matth. 6, 24-34: "Take no thought for your life," etc.; the fowls of the air, the lilies of the field; "but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." In the old gospel the doctrine is set forth in Christ's perfect way; in our Old Testament text this doctrine is illustrated by a living example, the widow of Zarephath. It is easy to build an introduction out of this excellent material. We have often heard the doctrine. It always sounds beautiful. But it is another thing entirely to live that doctrine. O yes, the heroes of faith may do it, but we generally feel that that excuses us who cannot claim such heroism. Well, here is a woman, not even reared in the Old Testament church, only a converted heathen widow. She was caught in a great famine. She is the very example we need to teach us the doctrine we already know.

The Poor Widow of Sarepta,

An Example of Complete Reliance on God's Providence.

- I. *In her submission to starvation at the will of God.*
- II. *In her deliverance from starvation by the hand of God.*

In elaborating the first part let us impress that ^Xit is only a small thing to rely on God by praying to him in the hour of our need and then to receive his answer and help with gratitude and joy. That is only the a-b-c of reliance. The real test of reliance is to submit to God's providence when he lets our misery, poverty, sickness, etc., continue without any relief, so that at last we lie down and die, since that is his grace and gracious will. In the widow's case God intervened. Remember he has two ways of rewarding such reliance: one, to deliver us at last; the other to let our death glorify him. — In the second part show how God in a wonderful way delivered the widow and her son, and how the curtain is drawn aside for us to see God's hand at work. God has the same power and wisdom still, with thousands of ways to deliver us; only in most cases now the curtain hides his hand, or we catch only a glimpse of it now and then. Some day we, too, shall see all that God's hand wrought in the hours of our need. —

G. Mayer offers us an outline with possibilities in it: "The Widow's Little Chamber in Sarepta: 1) A real home of care; 2) A rich treasure house; 3) A blessed hut of peace." One sees at once that in part two the main concept is lacking, for compare: in 1) care; in 2) . . . ; in 3) peace. Mayer seems to have striven too hard for the secondary terms, namely, "little chamber" in the theme, and "home," "treasure house," and "hut" in the parts; and after all his effort has produced nothing very satisfactory. So we prefer to recast:

The Widow's Humble Home in Sarepta.

- I. *A sad home of care.*
- II. *A bright home of faith.*
- III. *A blessed home of joy.*

As the widow may be made prominent in the sermon by exemplifying for us one side of the Godly Life, so on the other God's providence may be made prominent as bound up in a special way with the Godly Life. This according to the chapter in our dogmatics which teaches that God cares for all his creatures, in a special way for mankind, and in a most special way for his own children. We have an example of that most special providence in the widow.

The Poor Widow at Sarepta,**An Example of God's Special Providence over His Children.**

- I. *Even over the humblest.* — Compare Elijah with this poor, nameless, starving widow and her little son. That God should care especially for his prophet whom he expected to use for great deeds, we find quite natural. But here we see that he cares for the most lowly of his children, a poor, unnamed widow, and has use too for her; and for her child too young as yet to serve for any special work.
- II. *Even when they die.* — The widow and her child were kept from actually dying; yet see, they expected to die, and there are cases where God in his providence does let his children actually die. His providence, then, extends over us not only in our life with help and blessing in answer to prayer; but in the same way when in his love and wisdom he lets us die. Trust his providence like this widow unto death.
- III. *Even when a miracle is required.* — That God uses natural means in helping and blessing his children seems more evident to us, as when he brings men, money, medicine, the weather, etc., to our aid. But here we see that it is just as easy for him to help when all natural means absolutely fail, when no human power, no money or medicine, and no other means known to us could afford help. He has infinite power at his command.

Conclusion: — Shall we ever doubt his providence? Shall not he who gave his only Son for us add all these far lesser things?

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Job 5, 17-26

This is our text on *tribulation* as the mark of the Godly Life. Since, however, it deals less with the tribulation itself, and more with the Lord's help, we may conceive its contents as *the Lord's help in tribulation*.

Right here we had better go into the entire subject of suffering in this life. Most of our people understand it only partially, and the number of preachers who have mastered it and are really safe in handling it is not great by any means. This is one reason why the book of Job is so much a riddle or jumble to many, as was the subject of suffering to Job's three comfortless comforters and to Job himself at first. All becomes clear when suffering is really understood. — There is first of all the tremendous difference between the suffering of the ungodly or unbeliever and that of the godly or true believer. For the ungodly suffering is a sign of *God's wrath*, and that in two ways: first, of wrath in the sense of final rejection; secondly, in the sense of a final effort to drive to repentance. For the former the blows of God are merely a foretaste of what is impending in death and damnation. For the latter these blows are a final warning of what must impend, unless now at last they turn crushed and contrite and beg for grace. Thus all the suffering of the ungodly belongs in a class by itself, and dare never be confounded with the suffering of the godly, which belongs altogether in a different class. If the two are mixed, there is confusion worse confounded. — All the suffering of the godly is under *God's love*, designed and sent by that love, a mark and evidence

of it. If there is an appearance of wrath to the sufferer, this is not actually wrath, because the godly is God's child, and that means God's love as Father. This then is the broad difference between the ungodly and the godly in the matter of suffering. — But, as Delitzsch rightly says, and as others have likewise observed, not only when it comes to the book of Job, but also in many another section of Scripture, and certainly culminating in Christ and his suffering, this broad and general distinction between the suffering of the ungodly and of the godly does not carry us far enough in solving the problem especially of the suffering of the godly. Under the hand of *God's love* we can distinguish three kinds of suffering. — The first is *disciplinary suffering*, the *παιδεία* of Heb. 12, chastisement. The godly still has sins, therefore he needs chastisement, to keep alive in him this consciousness of sin, due repentance for sin, constant prayer for forgiveness, and constant watching against sin and earnest striving for amendment. This discipline may become very severe, so that the sufferer deems himself forsaken of God. But however great it may become, back of it always is God's love, not his wrath. — A second kind of suffering sent to the godly is *the suffering of trial*, *πειρασμός*, 1 Pet. 6-7, "temptations" in the sense of testings, "the trial of your faith." The purpose of this suffering is to strengthen faith, test and increase faithfulness by testing, reliance on God, patience, and sanctification, and hope. Read Rom. 5, 3 etc. on what "tribulations" work. It is the sifting of the wheat, the smelting of gold in the fire, removing all dross. By it God justifies his election, and makes it evident that neither life nor death, nor any other thing shall separate us from the love of God. This suffering may come in the very midst of our watching, prayer, and striving for holiness. It refines away the last secret leanings to sin, such as ignorant or unconscious self-righteousness. There is a trace of

discipline in it, but it goes much farther in directly stimulating the highest virtues of true godliness. — Finally, there is *the suffering of witness*, Matth. 5, 11 etc., for which, and for which alone, the New Testament has the significant term σταυρός, “the cross.” The other two kinds of suffering are inflicted for the godly man’s own sake, the first negatively to tear him away from the sin still in him, the other positively to increase the spiritual good already in him. But this third kind is for the sake of others and for the sake of God himself. It is suffering laid upon the sufferer just because he is faithful. It is shame, persecution, even martyrdom because an evil generation will not tolerate the testimony and witness of the godly man. Paul’s life is full of such suffering. Stephen died in this suffering. And both reflect in their suffering that of Christ, whose faithful witness the Jews would not endure. Here the catalog of sufferers in Heb. 11, stoned, sawn asunder, slain, wanderers, etc., “of whom the world was not worthy,” v. 38, has its place. This is the highest type of suffering. It has nothing to do with the sinfulness of the sufferer, it is for the glory of God. — We must add here that it is a piece of bad blundering to call any and all suffering of the godly “cross-bearing,” as when severe sickness and bodily pain are made our lot, or other misfortunes weigh us down. These are almost always of the lowest type, namely disciplinary, sometime of the middle type, the suffering in trial, never of the highest type, suffering in witness. In regard to all the suffering of the godly remember the rule of the old dogmatician Brenz: “He who looks with spiritual eyes will not judge a man’s moral condition by the suffering, but will judge his suffering by his moral condition.” In other words, do not look at a godly man’s suffering, and then say what kind of a man he is; but look at the kind of man he is, then say what the character of his suffering must be.

Right here is where the problem of the book of Job unfolds. Those three foolish comforters tried to judge Job by his suffering, and not his suffering by Job. So they arrive at a false conclusion against which Job in his integrity had to rebel. Eliphaz judges most mildly that Job is under discipline for some grave secret sin of his. The others judge more harshly, that Job is under God's wrath as a wicked man whom God is finally trying to drive to repentance. They were all wrong. Job was absolutely sure of that, yet he himself was still muddled and in the dark, and thus even charged God wrongfully. We ourselves could not properly understand Job's case, if the prolog and also the conclusion of the book of Job did not so plainly tell us what kind of man Job really was in God's sight, and thus from the man enable us to judge his suffering. It was of the middle type of godly suffering. Job was enduring *the suffering of trial*, he was gold tried and purged of dross in the fire. He was *not* of the third type; he did not suffer as a witness, did not bear the cross, hence is not in the list of Heb. 11.

Now we are ready for our text. It is part of the first speech of Eliphaz, and that means that it is not in itself the Word spoken by God. Eliphaz was not a true prophet, though he pretended to be. Job's suffering was not for discipline and consequently the result of sins, but for trial, in order to purge his faith, clarify, and strengthen it. This was beyond Eliphaz. He felt sure that Job's sins were being severely disciplined. Therefore he urges Job to repent: "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth," our text, v. 17. Moreover, as Delitzsch has put it and has found general approval in doing so: "As beautiful and as true as his speech is, when considered by itself, yet it is heartless, proud, stiff, coldly sensible," without a word of pity or sympathy, disregarding Job's former suffering which he bore with such wonderful

resignation, treating him as a man who self-righteously denies his sins, and wholly misunderstands Job's terrible distress and complaint. Eliphaz is apparently right in everything, as Dillman says; but right only on the surface. "If it were true that, because all are sinful before God, afflictions and pain are punishments of sin, and a man is happy in receiving this divine correction, why is Eliphaz himself not lying upon a heap of ashes like Job, racked with the torment of disease? A good, orthodox, prosperous man, he thinks himself a prophet, but is none. Were he tried like Job he would be as unreasonable and passionate, as wild in his declamations against life, as eager for death." Watson in *The Expositor's Bible*, who also says: "What does he say to throw light on the condition of a believing, earnest servant of the Almighty who is *always* poor, *always* afflicted, who meets disappointment after disappointment, and is pursued by sorrow and disaster even to the grave? The religion of Eliphaz is made for well-to-do people, like himself, and such only." — The words of Eliphaz which comprise our text shoot past the mark when applied to righteous Job. They treat of *disciplinary suffering*, and are true only of that. They would be entirely misapplied, even as Eliphaz did misapply them, if we should apply them to the suffering of trial, and still worse, to the suffering of witness (the cross). Job in his suffering was not honored by the cross as was Moses, Elijah, Isaiah (sawn asunder), Jeremiah, and others. This puts the preacher on our text in a peculiar position. He cannot take Eliphaz's words in the sense in which Eliphaz applied them to Job. So he must leave Job out, and dare not use him as illustrating Eliphaz's words. The preacher can take these words only as they stand. They are true only of disciplinary suffering, and in that sense Eliphaz indeed meant them, though he wrongly put Job's suffering in that class. Apparently Eliphaz knew of only this one

kind of suffering for the godly. Nor are Eliphaz's words in our text true because Eliphaz uttered them. That they are true, and in what sense they are true, we get, not from Eliphaz, but from Scripture otherwise. Now one might wish for some other text on the suffering of the godly; nobody could fault us for that. And yet this text, by making us unravel these complications, will prove more helpful after we have done that, than some far simpler text on godly suffering. It is usually so with complicated texts. This is why pericope system are so good: they make us study texts which we ourselves, looking for easy and obvious subjects, would hardly use. — Perhaps it will be a good thing to use the words of Eliphaz on disciplinary suffering as a basis first for elucidating that kind of suffering on the part of the godly man, because the Lord surely has to use much of it among our people; and then use these words, not as a basis, for they would not be that, but as a starting point, to elucidate Job's suffering as a matter of trial, and then the highest of all suffering, that of witness and martyrdom, of which there is less in our age, though still some. In this way we could cover the whole subject of the godly man's suffering. In thus going beyond our text we would let our people's need of instruction govern us, not merely the text as it stands. While we must say, Eliphaz's words are not God's own, this should be added: the Lord had these words of Eliphaz put down for our use and our learning. They are in the inspired record, and for this purpose. We thus use them as God intended us to do. As a believer in God Eliphaz voices what he knew of the godly man's sufferings. We have many brethren of Eliphaz in our midst who know no more than Eliphaz did. Let us make plain to the whole tribe of Eliphaz what their knowledge really amounts to, and let us so enlighten them that they may learn in regard to the godly man's suffering what they do not as yet know. — Our text is

the conclusion of Eliphaz's first speech. In his other speeches Eliphaz never rose any higher. Finally God stepped in and instructed all three comforters, also Elihu, and certainly Job, too. We may follow this cue.

17. Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.

This is the key-word of the text, hence we lift it out and place it by itself. It contains the two significant and decisive terms "correcteth" and "chastening." **Behold** calls for attention to the important statement now to be made. The word translated **happy** is *'ashre*, a plural construct noun (formed from the piel of *'ashar*, "to call happy") always in this form with a genitive following, as here also: **happy the man**; literally: "Oh, on the happy circumstance of the man!" Compare the comment on "blessed" in Ps. 1, 1, Sixth Sunday after Trinity. The term for **the man** is *'enosh*, used of humanity in general, and only occasionally of one human being, and then in the sense of mortal man. So we might translate: "Oh, on the happy circumstance of the mortal!" — The hiphil *yokichennu*, from *yakach*, means "to equalize" or to clear up something, and thus according to the context to clear up a thing as being right, or to clear it up as being wrong; hence either to justify, or, as here, to correct, rebuke, take to task: **whom God correcteth**. The word for "God" is *'Eloha*, which is the singular of the usual *'Elohim*, and is used in Job forty times. It names God from his almighty power. The idea of Eliphaz is that when the godly man sins and needs correction, in order to make him repent and amend, this is for the man not something to complain of, rebel against, or find fault with, but a great blessing. And beyond question this is what the Scriptures teach; God chastises every son whom he receives. Let us bow in repentance when his hand is

heavy upon us and our moisture is turned into the drought of summer, Ps. 32, 4. It is certainly a great blessing for us to be brought to a full realization of our sins, and to a release from them by repentance and betterment of life. — The parallel line draws the evident conclusion: **therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty**, *musar*, “discipline” or warning of *Shadday*, used in Job thirty-one times of God as the Almighty One. *Ma’as* means “to reject,” and thus “to despise” by not responding to the discipline. That would indeed be a grievous mistake. — These words of Eliphaz are improperly directed to Job, who had no special sins to repent of, and whom God was not correcting or chastening for any such sins. But they do apply very properly when children of God have sinned (like David for instance), and when God corrects them.

18. **For he maketh sore, and bindeth up:
he woundeth, and his hands make whole.**
19. **He shall deliver thee in six troubles:
yea, in seven, there shall no evil touch
thee.**
20. **In famine he shall redeem thee from
death:
and in war from the power of the sword.**
21. **Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of
the tongue:
neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction
when it cometh.**
22. **At destruction and famine thou shalt
laugh:
neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts
of the earth.**
23. **For thou shalt be in league with the stones
of the field:
and the beasts of the field shall be at peace
with thee.**

24. **And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and than shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin, Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth.**
26. **Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.**

Again these words are true in a limited way, namely in those cases when men have repented and amended, and God, as Isaiah puts it, gives them double blessing in the place of previous severe chastisement. They are also often true of cases where God sends trials to bring out faith and its virtues, and rewards faithfulness in such trials by sending great blessings. Job's own case applies here. But the words of Eliphaz are not true even of all these cases, namely those of salutary disciplinary and fruitful trial sufferings. Nor are they true of the suffering of the martyrs, Heb. 11. The preacher must know these exceptions, or he will fall into grave error, and in his own flock there may be sufferers whom his error may not only greatly discourage, but even lead to despair and to giving up their faith in God's love and pardon. Not all, only some, who respond to discipline, not all, only some, who come out of trials of faith, are blessed as Eliphaz here states. To be sure, when God does bless so abundantly we should recognize his infinite blessings and praise him accordingly. — Eliphaz uses this power of God to bless as an inducement to Job to confess his (supposed) sins, in order that God may lift his discipline and Job may again be happy and prosperous. Job is untouched by this appeal, for the reason already stated. Eliphaz had altogether misconceived the case

for which he is here prescribing. His diagnosis was wrong, hence his remedy is wrong also and only aggravates and makes the sufferer worse.

For, *ki*, substantiates the *'ashre* of v. 17. **He maketh sore**, the hiphil of *ka'ab*, causes pain by his corrective chastising. And when the chastisement has served its purpose, he **bindeth up**, *chabash*, binds up and heals the wounds again. — The second line is synonymous: **he woundeth**, *machats*, smashes, shatters, crushes, as with a severe blow. **And his hands make whole**, from *rapha'*, "to sew up wounds," hence the reference to hands, although the word is used generally of healing. It is true, the God who disciplines, can and does remove the suffering he thus causes, when his object is attained. To all under such discipline no better advice can be given than to submit and profit by it, so that God may bind and sew up the painful wounds again.

V. 19 shows how God heals again, and the *mashal* (or saying) with numbers is used, cf. Prov. 6, 16; 30, 15 etc.; and other instances. **He shall deliver thee in six troubles**, if there are that many; *tsarah*, "pressure," *Drangsal*, oppression or agony, from *tsur* "to constrict." And *yatstsil*, the hiphil from *natsal*, means to deliver by tearing out. The terms are strongly picturesque, as if the troubles cling to the sufferer with agonizing grip, and God tore the sufferer out of that crushing embrace. What relief is thus pictured! — **Yea, in seven**, if there should be more than the large number of six, **there shall no evil touch thee**, namely when God has delivered thee, no *ra'*, nothing bad or hurtful, to say nothing of anything as bad as *tsarah*. And it shall not even "touch thee," *yigga'* with *b^e* (from *naga'*), to say nothing of pressure that causes agony. This is the negative side of God's deliverance, taking the repentant sufferer out of all his pain and misery. We see the limitation of this word in cases like St. Paul's, who had to bear

the thorn in the flesh indefinitely, not for any sin of which he was to be purged, but for the continued exercise of humble patience. So there are other souls wholly at peace with God, yet bearing some painful burden in continued trial of faith. And yet it is literally true, God can and often does lift us out of troubles and gives us joyful, sunshiny days as marks of his pardon and favor.

Now follows a line of specifications, naming now this, now that, trouble. **In famine he shall redeem thee from death**, *phadah*, "to ransom," as one pays a price to free a captive. This verse mentions troubles that extend very far, like famine and war, when many are lost in death. He who by God's favor escapes is like a ransomed captive. — The parallel thought is added: **and in war from the power** (lit. "from the hands") **of the sword**, as if the sword reaches out to catch its victims in death. The sense is, God shall protect thee, whether in actual battle, or when the enemy invades the land. In both cases here mentioned there are very evident limitations. For not all faithful children of God escape in famine or in war. And yet there are wonderful cases of deliverance. Here the mysterious hand of providence is at work. We cannot generalize. But when God does so spare a child of his, it is he that does it, and blessed is his name.

As in v. 20 so in verse 21 troubles are paired. War and famine go together; words that lash and deeds that destroy likewise go together. **Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue**; Luther: "He will shelter thee from the scourge of the tongue." We, too, speak of the tongue "lashing"; so here the vicious words of the tongue are likened to a scourge, a short-handled whip with several ugly lashes intended to inflict as much pain as possible when applied, as it was, to the naked back of the victim. *Chaba'* in the niphal *thechabe'*, "thou hidest thyself," means: "thou hast

found a refuge or shelter in which to hide thyself," i. e. God has provided thee such a refuge. Others may suffer when evil men use their wicked tongues, but not thou. The *b^e* with *shot* is local, and then temporal, hence not "from," but "in," we might say "during" the time when the scourge is wielded. — Destructive deeds are placed beside destructive words: **neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.** *Shod* in any violent deed. The idea is that such violent deed shall come, even as in the first line there shall be a scourge (laying on blows) of the tongue; but neither the blows, nor the violence shall reach the man who has God's protection. — Here we must again apply, as before, the necessary limitations. St. Paul wrote: "By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true," 2 Cor. 6, 8. And Rom. 8, 36: "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter"; and Rom. 11, 3: "Lord, they have killed thy prophets." This was the suffering of the true witnesses. So in the suffering of trial evil tongues and hands are often allowed to inflict great pain on God's faithful children. It is true, however, that even in these cases God is the refuge of these sufferers, and thus they do not feel abandoned. But they are not kept from suffering, perhaps are terribly exposed to it. The Jews scourged Christ with their tongues long before Pilate's soldiers scourged him in the judgment hall. The truth in Eliphaz's words is that God can and often does cover and shelter his children from vicious tongues and hands; and when he does this it is a precious mark of his favor.

There is an interweaving of v. 20 and 21 in v. 22. It is more than an anastrophe, i. e. repeating the thought of "destruction" in 21 b at the beginning of v. 22, for in 22 a "destruction" is coupled with "famine" from v. 20. Boehmer is right when he notes that the progress of thought lies only partly in the different

kind of danger and evil, and for the remaining part in the verbs. He notes this as regards the verb "thou shalt laugh," but it is true also of "neither shalt thou be afraid." **At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh** introduces the subjective feeling, adding it to the objective idea of protection. The thought is highly dramatic: the efforts of these evil forces to reach the godly man are all in vain and thus appear ludicrous to him, he in his safety under God's protection can actually laugh at them. *Shod* is the same as in v. 21, but *kaphan*, "hunger," is a synonym of *ra'ab*, "famine" in v. 20. *Shachaq* means "to laugh" or joke about. — In **the beasts of the earth** one of the destructive forces is named, but at the same time a connection is made with v. 23, where the interweaving is carried forward another step. The beasts and the stones (v. 23) belong to nature, as distinguished from man; and "the beasts of the earth," v. 22, are the same as "the beasts of the field." The verb in **neither shalt thou be afraid**, *thira'* (*yare'*), is the same as in v. 21, thus helping the intertwining.

The reason for this subjective happy fearlessness is stated by means of a few examples. The first is: **For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field**, lit.: "with the stones etc. (is) thy covenant." One cannot see why this should mean: "thou hast obligated the stones for thyself," Boehmer. *B'rith* is the well-known term for "covenant," used so constantly of God's covenant with Abraham and Israel. The expression here is meant to be striking, for how can inanimate stones make a covenant? There is something here of the exceptional idea in God's covenant with Abraham, for always it is God alone who made it, never God and Abraham mutually; Abraham only received the covenant. God always calls it "*my* covenant," never "ours" and never "thine." So here we read: "*thy* covenant," namely Job's; not "their" covenant, that of the stones, or "yours" that of Job and of

the stones mutually. But even this does not lessen the striking expression of stones being covenanted with. The idea is that even the stones of the field will be friendly to Job, when God favors him again. Sin has turned also inanimate nature against man, and under the divine displeasure such lifeless things as stones seem purposely to get into a man's way, to fall just in the wrong direction, to lie just where they will break his plow, etc. It is thus surely a signal mark of divine favor, when his providence makes the very stones act favorably. So we may say that the real thought in *berith* is one that goes beyond the stones and involves God whose creatures they are. — Stones are lifeless, and are mentioned after the living beasts of v. 22, and therefore also in the parallel line living creatures are mentioned again: **and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee**; for a covenant means peace. As the stones are meant of the ground that is tilled, so the beasts are here connected with the cultivation of the fields: "the beasts of the field," they shall leave thy crops unharmed. *Hashl^emach* is the hophal from *shalem* and means: "shall be in concord with thee," instead of in conflict.

Now follows the result of what has been stated as facts and illustrated by the examples in v. 19-23: **And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace**, "that peace (is) thy tabernacle, or tent." Thou shalt "know" and realize it, namely by experiencing what has been so graphically stated. Note how the chain idea is kept up, the intertwining of the verses: the peace in v. 23 is extended to v. 24 and is even increased. It is not necessary to read *shalom* either as an accusative "in peace," or as an adjective "peaceful." So also *'oholeka*, "tent," is not merely a poetical term for house and home, the Germ. *Haus und Hof*, but as the poet really meant it: peace shall be an invisible tent over thee, covering thee and all that is thine. That is always true of the godly man

as far as God is concerned; he lives in God's peace as in a tent. It is true of our outward life only insofar as God grants us undisturbed lives full of sunshine and quiet. — The parallel line adds: **and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin**, which the translation spoils completely. *Phaqad* here is "to inspect," to visit in order to examine closely; and *naveh* is pasturing place, where an oriental nomad has settled down with his flocks and herds, and in this sense "thy habitation." And *chata'* here *thecheta'*, sec. pers. masc. sing. imperfect kal, is modified by the preceding verb "to inspect," hence certainly not: "shalt not sin," but: shalt not miss (anything). This is what it means to dwell in the tent of peace; to have peace like a tent covering a man and all his possessions. He may go at any time through his place of habitation with its fields and flocks, and he will find nothing missing or gone, everything safely and properly in its place. God is his friend, and even makes nature round about him friendly and helpful to him. Some have tried to find in this and in similar statements a typically Old Testament idea, namely that God's favor in those olden days was always manifested by granting outward prosperity; but this is certainly a mistake. Job himself is a contradiction of it, for while God did bless him outwardly in a marked way, he also afflicted him far more than our people are afflicted now. There were poor people, sick and unfortunate people among the saints in the old covenant, just as there are now in the new. The corollary is wrong too, that in the new covenant God blesses spiritually where in the old he blessed temporally, and that in preaching on Old Testament texts we should therefore translate for our people to-day the Old Testament earthly prosperity into New Testament spiritual blessings. God blesses us in temporal things just as much as he did in olden days. He still spreads a tent of peace over us, and how many, many days may we not go and find all our

belongings intact? And our spiritual blessings have the same spiritual counterparts among the old covenant saints. This strange wisdom which invents differences where there are none should no longer attract us. Let us read both Testaments ourselves and learn what the differences are, and not accept spurious ones which supposed learning hands down to us as so many traditions that no one should question.

V. 25 adds the blessing of children and grandchildren to the blessing of safety and property: **Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, rab**, numerous, many. Note again the chain linking: "thou shalt know" exactly repeated from v. 24. This is one of the inner beauties of the entire description. *Zera'* is "seed," here in the sense of children. — **And thine offspring as the grass of the earth**, extends the idea. *Tse'etsa'eka* is "offspring," the plural "descendants." The expression is hyperbolic: "as the plants of the earth," '*eseb*, Ger. *Kraut*, all kinds of herbs, and not "grass." As any kind of plant multiplies in its native habitat, so shall the descendants of the godly man, blessed of God in this life, also multiply. It is still true that children are a heritage of the Lord. One of the curses of God is race suicide. Here is a point to stress for our people who have begun the damnable business of decimating their offspring. Yet when we look back only one or two generations, how many old patriarchs and great grandmothers do we find, in whom this word of Eliphaz is illustrated? Not all have large families, but some, and that means not a few. For God gives blessings as he chooses.

V. 26 reaches the end in a natural way: **Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age**, *kelach* (used only twice) "ripeness." The idea is not that of senility, for Koenig has *Vollkraft*, "full strength," and for our passage *Vollreife*, "full ripeness." — No better comment can be offered than that of the final

line: **like a shock of corn cometh in in his season.** *Gadish* is a corn-shock, sheaves piled together. The comparison is beautiful in several respects. We grow grain, not for its beauty while growing, but for the sheaves it will make when ripe and cut at last. So the godly man's goal is not to keep receiving all kinds of gifts in this life, but to ripen in faith and faithfulness for a blessed death. And here not merely one sheaf, but a full shock of sheaves is the picture. The godly man ripens to such richness that God at last has a full harvest in him. The ascending is a fine touch too, for '*alah* means "to come up," namely to the top of the hill where the threshing floor is situated. "Cometh in" is too much like hauling the loaded sheaves into a barn, as farmers do now. So the godly man, rich and ripe in grace, is lifted to heaven. How many have thus ascended each "in his season"? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his. V. 26 is a favorite funeral text for old saints in the church. Not all have long lives, even though they are faithful and true. Yet the godly man is always blessed in his end. God makes our lives long or short in his providence. So, rightly understood, these words of Eliphaz are true.

SUGGESTIONS

Our text opens up for us the question of suffering as sent by God upon his children. It is thus related to the old gospel text, Luke 7, 11-17, which shows us a widow weeping behind the bier of her only son. Compare also the second half of the Eisenach gospel, Matth. 11, 28-30. As thus opening the question, and only very partially solving it, we may use our text. It may be done as here suggested:

The Story of the Suffering of God's Children.

One of their marks is that they must endure suffering and affliction. The story of their suffering has three grand chapters.

When Eliphaz tried to comfort Job in his great suffering by our text he showed that he understood only one of these chapters. We have a good many Eliphazes still. Let us learn the whole story:

- I. *God disciplines his children by means of suffering.* Eliphaz and Luke 13, 1, etc. There is discipline when we fall into some particular sin. There is discipline when our sense of sin and guilt is too weak. — Such suffering is to lead us to repentance, and to deepen our repentance. — For all those who thus repent there is great comfort: first spiritual gain; secondly the assurance that God can and will remove the suffering and grant great blessing, sometimes to the extent pictured by Eliphaz. — But much more must be said.

- II. *God tries his children by means of suffering.* God tests our faith, patience, etc., to make us spiritually stronger; and to show that we are his children indeed, I Pet. 1, 7. — That was what God was doing with godly Job, chapters one and two. Job had committed no special sin, and was fully conscious of his sins in general, and yet he suffered terribly. He himself did not at first know why, nor did Eliphaz, who tried to comfort him. We have the same cases to-day. — Learn then, that happy is not only the man whom the Lord correcteth, but also the man whom the Lord tries. He has similar comfort: first, great spiritual gain (yet here different from the previous case), and secondly, that God can make an end of his suffering, and may grant great blessings.

- III. *God permits his children to bear witness for him by means of suffering.* This was entirely beyond the conception of both Eliphaz and Job when the one tried in vain to comfort the other. It is the crown of all godly suffering. Christ suffered as a Witness, the prophets, apostles, etc. — It is the suffering of confession in persecution. Many refuse to accept this suffering. Peter once denied. Few stand firmly for truth, doctrine of truth, etc., in the face of vicious opposition. — Great comfort, Matth. 5, 10, etc. Not earthly

prosperity, for usually like Paul who kept the faith the reward is beyond, in the "crown of righteousness," 1 Tim. 4, 8.

This is going beyond the text proper, and yet it is fully justified even homiletically. As one cannot understand any section of the book of Job without understanding the entire book, so one cannot properly understand one part of godly suffering without a grasp of the whole of it. Eliphaz in missing the point in Job's case really compels us to state Job's true case. That much lies in the real significance of the text. In order that we on our part do not leave a wrong impression, namely, that there are only two kinds of suffering, we must add the third kind. It is wrong to treat some sacred subjects in part only.

Eliphaz and Job:

The Riddle of Godly Suffering.

- I. *Eliphaz understood only the first part of the solution, and imagined that to be the whole solution.*
- II. *Job was wrestling with the second part of the solution, was not helped by Eliphaz; God finally helped him.*
- III. *Neither Eliphaz nor Job knew the final part of the solution, which has the greatest comfort of all.*

In God's Hands

Are Both the Suffering and the Prosperity of the Godly.

- I. *He sends both in his grace.*
- II. *He sends both to glorify his grace. .*

Why Doctor Eliphaz's Patient Got Worse Instead of Better.

Because he knew only

- One kind of suffering*
- One kind of comfort*
- One kind of happiness*

where in reality there are three of each.

"Happy is the Man Whom God Correcteth!"

- I. *Though it seem grievous,*
- II. *Yet it is wholesome,*
- III. *And leads to great blessing.*

One can use an outline like this, reproducing the thought of Eliphaz, in the first place only if Job is left out of the sermon altogether. Now this is hardly satisfactory, because these words are in the book of Job, addressed to Job, and yet not accepted by Job as meeting his case. So in the second place, we may clear up matters in an introduction which explains that Eliphaz's words apply only to disciplinary suffering, and that because we need so much of that we will this time consider it in particular; adding, however, a brief statement of the other two kinds of godly suffering.

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ps. 75, 4-7

This Psalm sounds like one of the Asaph poems. Only eight of its short weighty lines form our text. But they form a compact unit, which is the requirement of a good text. The commentators, as usual, are unable to show the exact historical background of this psalm. Some of the old MSS. of the Septuagint add to the heading: "Against the Assyrian," which seems correct. Perhaps it was composed by one of the Asaph family in the days when Isaiah had foretold the downfall of the Assyrian power then rising so haughtily to threaten the nation. It sounds like the lyrical echo of Isaiah's prophecy. — The lines embraced in our text are directed against pride. The old gospel text for this Sunday, in its second half, deals with a different aspect of the same general subject. In Luke 14, 7-11 Jesus rebukes the pride of the Pharisees who sought the chief seats at feasts, and ends with the words: "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Our poet deals with the pride that rises against God, and shall therefore the more surely be abased. Pride as a vice is a negative idea, and has as its positive counterpart *humbleness of mind*. The Godly Life is in its very nature graced by *humbleness* over against God. The godly man knows that God "putteth down one, and setteth up another." Therefore he is bold, like Asaph, to warn the haughty; and wise, like Asaph, to bow in true humility before God. This is enough to point us in the right direction in our study of the text for sermon purposes. — God is supreme and

will assert his supremacy, for which Israel gives thanks. When under pressure of all the haughty, evil forces in the world the very foundation of right, justice, and truth give way and the inhabitants are dissolved in anarchy and all manner of baseness, God declares: "I bear up the pillars of it," namely reinstate the inner supports that have broken down. Here our text begins:

4. **I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly:
and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn.**
5. **Lift not up your horn on high:
Speak not with a stiff neck.**
6. **For promotion cometh neither from the east,
nor from the west,
nor from the south.**
7. **But God is the judge:
he putteth down one, and setteth up another.**

Who is it that declares: **I said etc.**? Delitzsch is positive, it is still God who is speaking, though "Sela" has marked a pause. He thinks if God's people are meant we should have had *'al ken*, "therefore," before "I said." But when a poet speaks dramatically, to say nothing about the general work of shaping his lines, prosaic dicta like that cannot be laid down for him. After the Sela pause all reads properly if we assume that either the people are speaking, or Asaph as their representative. The "therefore" is implied, for v. 4 and the following depend on what precedes. — The persons addressed are **the fools**, and they are warned: **Deal not foolishly**. Noun and verb are from *halal*, "to make shine," and thus glorify, which, however, came to be used ironically as a kind of second verb *halal*, "to be senseless." In what the senselessness here consists we must judge from the context. It would be loud and proud boasting against God, his

people, etc. So we might translate: "braggarts, brag not." — In the parallel line they are called **the wicked**, *r^esha'im*, Ger. *Frevler*, men who turn their wicked opposition against God. And these are warned: **Lift not up the horn**, a standard figure in the Scriptures for exaltation; see, for instance, the last verse of the Psalm, where "the horns of the righteous" are mentioned parallel with those of the wicked. The "horn," for instance of the bull, marks his strength, is his weapon, and thus his pride. Not the lowering of the horns for attack is here meant, for *rum* means "to be high," and *tharimu*, "lift up," with head held high as in triumph.

Two more lines emphasize the warning: **Lift not up your horn on high**, repeating the last part of the last line in the previous couplet, as in the songs of degrees, or as in the chain couplets, and using a slight addition: "on high," *marom*, "height," with *l^e*. This emphasizes the warning against triumphant pride and boasting. — The second line is synonymous, and shows that the lifting up of the horn is meant of boastful, prideful speaking: **speak not with a stiff neck**, lit.: "speak (not) with a neck stiffly erect." Delitzsch makes '*athaq* a neuter object: *Freches*, "something impertinent"; but this leaves the word "neck" bare, and one is not said "to speak with the neck" an impertinent thing, even in Hebrew. Koenig has '*athaq* = "proudly erect," which accords with "neck" and keeps the idea of the previous two lines in the lifting up of the horn. — The four lines of v. 4-5 have their application to-day to all men who disregard God and his Word. It is then that they lift themselves up in pride, Satan's first sin, talk senselessly, and act in the same manner. Think of the unholy pride of men who call themselves scientists, that is, people who know, and either brush God aside altogether, the greatest and most enlightening object of knowledge in the whole world, or contradict his Word,

the greatest and truest fund of knowledge in the whole world. It is as if men should start to explore the world, and to begin with would say: "Now this sun in the heavens has nothing to do with the earth, so first of all we will put it out; and its flood of light is of no value to us in our exploration, so we will dispense with it"; and having enveloped the earth in black darkness would take their tallow candles and start out exploring, triumphant, blatant and boastful of what they most certainly intend to do, and scornful of the poor fools who prefer the sun and walk about and study the earth in its light. These big "fools" have hosts of lesser ones to follow them. Have they impressed any of us? Then there are the "fools" who shape their ideas of life, and their actual lives (business, pleasure, and daily round of activities, on up to sickness, and even death) without reference to God and his Word. In their pride they go their own way, and pity those who still bow humbly in church and at altar, and from the pulpit receive the Lord's light and truth. Oh, this sinful pride of open and secret unbelief!

The warning to "the fools" is substantiated: **For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south.** The three *ki* at the head of v. 6, 7 and 8 state three reasons against this senseless pride, although our English version translates the second *ki*, v. 7, with the adversative "but." The question here to be decided is what does *harim* mean? It is the regular word for "mountains"; but an old Midrash notice (Jewish exegetical treatise, 4th to 12th century), tells us that *harim* means "mountains" in all Scriptures except in our Psalm. So some of the Jewish commentators follow the Midrash; and our English does also, translating *harim* by "promotion," taken in the sense of exaltation, since mountains are high. So "mountains," *harim*, is taken in a highly modified figurative sense, for which, however, there is

no second example. Moreover, since our A. V. is much dependent on Luther's German translation, the sense of this English rendition is very likely that given by Luther: *Es habe keine Not, weder vom Aufgang, noch vom Niedergang, noch von dem Gebirge in der Wueste*, putting these words in the mouth of "the fools" who were lifting up their horn against poor, weak Israel. However, even Luther takes *harim* as "mountains." Read in Luther's way we get the following. The Assyrian hosts were threatening Israel and Jerusalem from the north, for which reason also Asaph omits the north, and speaks only of the other three directions. Now, the proud leaders of the Assyrians felt certain that there was no need to worry on their part about any help coming to Israel either from the east or the west or the south; no allies could come from any of these directions. The west, of course, was the Mediterranean Sea — no chance for help there. There were no formidable nations in the east at all. The south is mentioned last, because Egypt lay in that direction and might, if so minded, send an expedition to save Israel; but Egypt was doing nothing of the kind. Many of the Israelites trusted in Egypt, and Isaiah warned them and scored them severely, compare Is. 29, 18-21, The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity, introduction. So a good deal may be said for Luther's view that v. 6 is an expression of the prideful talk of the fools who were forgetting God. The more, since "speak not" just precedes in v. 5. Here would be a sample of such speaking. — *Midbar* means "desert," and *midbar harim* "desert of the mountains," namely the Idumean and Arabian desert with Horeb and Sinai in the way of mountains. Since this lay to the south of Jerusalem our A. V. simply translates "the south," margin "the desert." — Commentators usually read v. 6 as spoken by Israel, or Asaph for Israel, to the proud Assyrian "fools." Then this verse is Israel's own assurance that against the

mighty invader from the north her help is not in human allies, but in God alone. And so the humble confidence of Israel in God and in the assurance of his Word revealed to Isaiah, e. g. Is. 29, 7-8 would give rise to this expression.

Ki in v. 7 substantiates v. 6, if read as a word of Israel, by putting the positive idea that God controls, over against the negative that there is no help in human allies. If v. 6 is read as an expression of the haughty Assyrians, then *ki* in v. 7 substantiates the warning in v. 4-5 that these fools shall not speak as they do. In neither case do we need *ki* in the sense of *ki 'im*, **but**; "for" is fully sufficient, the adversative idea in the thought taking care of itself. — **God is judge** is striking in its terseness. *Shophet*, "judge," is the participle from *shaphat*, "to judge," really: "the one judging," but in the sense of deciding what is actually right. It is, however, more than a judicial decision which powerful and haughty men might flagrantly ignore and deride; it is the execution of that sentence, which gives full rights to the righteous man according to the divine judgment, and actually punishes the wrong-doer according to that judgment. Thus *shaphat*, and also *shophet*, receive the idea of helping and delivering the wrongfully oppressed, who may therefore confidently appeal to this Judge as their great Friend and Helper. — The terse statement: "God is judge," is therefore made clearer by adding: **he putteth down one, and setteth up another**, namely according to his just decision. This *yashphil* (*shaphel*), "he putteth down," humbles, crushes, is for the fools who exalt themselves in their pride against God; while *yarim* (*rum*), "he setteth up," exalts and makes high, pertains to the righteous who bow in faith and faithfulness before him, however lowly, weak, helpless they may appear to the proud, however much they may be derided and mocked. As therefore the proud were earnestly warned, so in this

statement the humble are greatly comforted. Of course, God does both the abasing and the exalting in his own way and in his own good time. He is 'Elohim, the Almighty, and blessed are we if we leave in his hands what thus belongs to him. There are few rhymes in Hebrew; yet it seems as if the one between the last lines of v. 6 and 7 were intended: *harim* and *yarim*, possibly to tie the thought of the two verses together by means of the similar sound.

SUGGESTIONS

The substance of this brief text is simple. It shows us pride, how it acts and talks; humility, how it acts and talks; and what God does with both. And that is the backbone of the sermon. It connects well with the previous text on suffering in the Godly Life; for a life so marked naturally will show the further mark and stamp of humbleness. It is, moreover, a mark that should be stressed, for there is probably as much sinful pride in the world as ever, and a prideful attitude over against God, his Word, certain parts of that Word, the church, etc., is liable to invade our own membership. What humbleness we have needs to be increased and made truly spiritual.

The Godly Life is Graced by Humility.

It knows too well:

- I. *That God is the Judge supreme.*
- II. *That men are fools who deny it.*
- III. *That submission is true exaltation.*

Humb'le Asaph and the Proud Assyrian.

- I. *The proud Assyrian laughed at God.*
A type of all who do so still.
- II. *Humble Asaph bowed to God.*
In this Psalm, and in his life, making Israel do the same; a type of all true children of God.
- III. *God smote the one, blessed the other.*
The Assyrian's downfall, Is. 10, 8, etc.; 14, 24, etc.; 30, 31; 36, 1, etc., and chapter 37, especially 37, 36, etc. — We still read Asaph's Psalm, and know he is one of God's saints in heaven.

**The Certainty That God Putteth Down One and Setteth Up
Another.**

- I. Warns the proud;*
- II. Comforts and encourages the humble.*

Let Us Learn to Think Rightly of Christian Humility.

- I. The world always pities it.*
- II. Christians themselves often fail to appreciate it.*
- III. God always loves it.*
- IV. The humble alone shall be exalted.*

The Blessedness of True Humility.

This humility:

- I. Frees from the senselessness of pride.
That is certainly worth a great deal.*
- II. Places into the right attitude toward God.
And that is always the vital thing.*
- III. Faces with courage all who are proud.
And warns them in no uncertain way.*
- IV. Is crowned and honored by God.
Now in his own time and way; at last for ever.*

THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 Chron. 1, 7-12

Here we reach the last trait of the Godly Life to be registered in this series of texts. What this trait is we gather less from what Solomon prayed for than from what he did *not* pray for, even as God himself stresses this negative side. It is plain, too, that when Solomon prays for wisdom and knowledge to govern the nation over which God had just made him king, any direct application of this positive side of his petition is hampered, if not made impossible, by the little circumstance that none of us poor mortals is in such an exalted position. So the application would be much in the nature of an anti-climax. As a matter of fact, were we endowed with Solomon's wisdom and knowledge we would have no real opportunity to utilize it since we are neither kings nor rulers of nations. So we conclude that the point of our text lies in the negative side of Solomon's petition, in the things he did *not* pray for, therefore was *not* greatly concerned about, namely riches, wealth, honor, power, long life. Here the application to us can be made with full force, according to the logical principle: from the greater to the less. For if a great king like Solomon could treat these possessions as minor ones entirely, surely we ordinary people can do so also. That we are correct in our estimate of the object of this text is corroborated by the Eisenach gospel text for this Sunday, Mark 10, 17-27, the Rich Young Ruler, which in that series is to teach "freedom from mammonism." Our text is on the same line, only positive (Solomon shows this freedom),

while Mark 10 is negative (the rich young ruler lacks this freedom). At the same time our text is broader, because it deals not only with riches and mammon, but at the same time with other earthly, material, and temporal values. Solomon, who had far greater need of all of them in his kingly position than we ordinary citizens, men, women, and children, can ever have, shoved them all aside — he wanted and felt he needed something better and higher. So the subject here to be treated is that indispensable trait of the Godly Life which we may term *unworldliness*; we might also call it unselfishness, though only in a way. In getting our grasp of the text it may be well to note that it is not a concrete example to the admonition of Jesus to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, whereupon all the necessary earthly things will be added unto us, i. e. thrown in for good measure. To be sure, they were thus thrown in for Solomon, but only as additions to wisdom and knowledge, not in his case to his love of the kingdom and his possession of righteousness or pardon with God. A man may be in the kingdom, justified and saved, and yet unable to be the governor of a state, the president of a country — these two are quite different. If we seek a parallel to our text, perhaps the best one is from Solomon's own Proverbs 30, 7-8: "Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me." This reflects the Christian's right attitude toward earthly things. In a world that is money-mad, filled with ambition to rule and dominate, prompted by hate and revenge, frantic to hang onto life as long as possible, a text like ours is needed. And for our people we may well turn it somewhat in the way Jesus did when he warned us against trying to serve God and mammon at the same time, Matth. 6, 24. Observe that our text has a fuller parallel in

1 Kgs. 3, 6 etc. — Solomon was but a young man when the kingdom fell to him at David's death, only about 18 to 20 years old. The prophet Nathan had helped to train him for his future high position, and his father David, too, had not only arranged with the princes and notables that this son of his should succeed him upon the throne, but had labored earnestly to impress upon his son the essentials needed for his successful reign. Solomon himself refers to these things in his prayer. Now he had come to the throne in the most honorable way and with God's own sanction. He marked his ascension by a signal act of worship, assembling the notables of Israel and a host of the people at Gibeon where the tabernacle stood and there in their presence honoring God with a freewill offering of a thousand bullocks. This showed his attitude on beginning his reign — would that he had not afterwards departed from it, 1 Kgs. 3, 3.

7. In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee. 8. And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast showed great mercy unto David, my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. 9. Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me a king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. 10. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people *that is so great?*

It was the night immediately after the grand sacrifice at Gibeon. Solomon's own first signal act as king was thus to honor God and to pledge himself and all his reign as king to God. It has always been the way with true children of God: "Begin with God!" The more serious and important any situation or work is, the more difficult or doubtful of success, and the more they feel their own weakness and inadequacy,

the more fervently they turn to God from whom all our help cometh. — And now God makes a remarkable answer to Solomon's sacrifice. In a dream, 1 Kgs. 3, 5, **did God appear unto Solomon** and communicated with him. On the entire subject of divine communications and appearances in dreams, or rather God's use of dreams in communicating with men, see Delitzsch, *Bibl. Psychologie*, p. 283 etc. While dreams are the lowest form of such communication, they are nevertheless both adequate for God's purpose, and sure beyond any doubt or question on the part of the recipient. God controls our sleeping as well as our waking. The sleep of the body does not mean that the soul, too, is dormant; it may be very active, as our common dreams show. But while all ordinary dreams reflect only our own subjective condition, whether it be merely the physical or the mental or both, dreams of divine communication disclose to the soul during bodily sleep realities from above, and always, as all the sacred records show, so that the sleeper at the time as well as afterwards on waking knows beyond question that he has received a communication from God. How God "did appear" unto Solomon that night we are not told, just the fact being noted. It was as real, however, as if Solomon had seen and heard him during his waking hours. — God appeared in some recognizable manner **and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.** There is no introductory explanation, no preamble, nothing that leads up to the surprising offer of God. There needed to be nothing. This offer corresponded exactly with Solomon's state of mind, who felt his youth, his inexperience, his helplessness before a tremendous task, and thus his great dependence upon God. What led up to God's offer was this situation of Solomon and his realization of it. Perhaps on falling asleep he had asked God's help, and had thrown himself upon God's support. And now God bids him ask

anything that he may desire. What grace and generosity on God's part! What an opportunity for Solomon! To whom had God ever opened his great treasure house in this way with the word: Help yourself! For in the bidding: "Ask" etc., there is plainly implied: "I will give it." Suppose God should speak so to you to-night — what would you ask? Yet withal, this bidding to ask anything he might choose is a test of Solomon, to bring out what his heart's desire really is. Did gold, glamour or other earthly things captivate him, so that he would reach out for them? The question here really put to Solomon is this: What is it that you want most of all? One thing, of course, is here in the nature of the case excluded, since Solomon already had it, namely righteousness and a place in God's kingdom. The alternatives that confronted Solomon did not include this supreme treasure of the soul. So also Solomon already had the throne as God's gift to him. The divine bidding meant only this: "Thou who art my child, and whom I have made king of Israel, ask whatever thou wilt in this thy position, and I will grant it."

Now this was in a dream, while Solomon was asleep. Therefore he could not stop, as a man awake might, and reason, think carefully, perhaps consult advisers, and thus make his choice. God was addressing, we may say, Solomon's bare soul just as that soul actually was and felt. The answer of Solomon must, therefore, be understood as the real expression of his soul. It reflects his soul's actual attitude. There was no calculation behind Solomon's choice. No ulterior motive prompted him to ask something for appearance sake which otherwise he would not have asked. God would have seen through that anyway; and, as already stated, in the condition of sleep all such possibilities were shut out to begin with. So **Solomon said unto God** what was truly uppermost in his soul. First of all he voices his fullest appreciation

of what God had done for his father David and thus now for him as that father's son: **Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead.** The expression '*asah chesed 'im* etc. signifies: to exercise grace over (or upon) someone. And *chesed* is here in the usual sense of *favor Dei*, which is bestowed and received without any claim, merit, or desert on the part of the favored one. We must, however, not read the words of Solomon superficially, as if he were impressed only by the act of divine providence which had made David a king, and now Solomon David's successor, also a king. This *chesed* on David is more than mere earthly kingship, and the succession of Solomon far more than that some crown-prince should eventually ascend his father's earthly throne. The narrative in 1 Kgs. 3 is fuller and mentions David's godliness. What Solomon means by that we see at once when we recall God's promise to David, 2 Sam. 7, 16: "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever." 1 Chr. 17, 14. Ordinary earthly kings come and go. Beyond that there is little to say. In David's, and now in Solomon's, case there is far more, namely God's Messianic plan concerning Israel, centering in David's house and lineage. That is why it was so important for David to walk in godliness; and that is why it was so significant that a son of David should now sit on his throne. In Solomon's succession God had fulfilled the first part of the promise to David concerning an everlasting kingdom for his house. The crown of that promise we see in Christ, God's Son and David's heir upon an eternal throne. And thus we catch the real thing that captivated and elevated Solomon's soul at his ascension. It was not any earthly splendor in being merely a king, but the grace of God in being a link in this eternal kingship leading up to Christ. No need to

puzzle about how much Solomon actually understood in his own mind about it all, and then in a critical spirit reducing it down to the lowest minimum. He understood all that God had revealed of it up to that time, for he knew the Abrahamic covenant and its promise, and how David, his father, had been the bearer of the promise in that covenant, and how he was its bearer now. Trust the old prophet Nathan for all necessary instruction in that line. Overlook not that Solomon says *chesed gadol*, "great grace." The hiphil of *malak* means "to make king," make to reign.

After voicing his full appreciation of what God had thus done, Solomon reveals his heart's highest desire: **Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established.** We may understand *'aththah* either temporal or logical: "now," at this time, or for this reason. The full name "Lord God" combines God's covenant relation with his omnipotent power: thou God of grace and of power. For *chesed 'im — David* in v. 8 we now have *d'barka 'im David*, in both cases *'im* = "in regard to"; thus the latter: "thy word in regard to David." The niph'al *ye'amen*, from *'aman*, means "show firmness," stand solid; thus here translated "be established." Our Amen is the Hebrew *'amen*, "verily," derived from this verb. Solomon's greatest desire is that nothing may interfere with this promised word regarding his father. All was firm and solid while David lived; that all should be firm and solid now that Solomon had succeeded David, was Solomon's great prayer. Here we see plainly why the ordinary pomp and show of kings, however great these might be, was beneath Solomon. — The reason for this earnest desire and prayer on his part is: **for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude;** margin: "much as the dust of the earth." Note that "thou," *'aththah*, is emphatic, and 1 Kgs. 3, 7 shows

why, namely as contrasted with Solomon: "and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in." The sense is that the Lord God, since *he* has made this young and inexperienced man king over so great a people, must see to it that the wonderful promise regarding David be in no way jeopardized thereby. That *chesed* and *dabar* is the supreme thing for Solomon; it must stand firm at all hazard. Solomon, we may say, though he prized his kingship ever so highly, would rather have seen some other son of David king in his place, than to have that "mercy" and "promise" upset. Let us appreciate fully what all this means as a true expression of what was at this time in Solomon's heart. Not by his own scheming (think of traitorous Absalom) had Solomon obtained the throne; God had placed him there. Only now let the old glorious promise remain firm as ever. "Numerous as the dust of the earth" is hyperbolic in the sense of 1 Kgs. 3, 8: "that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude." Hyperboles like this are subjective expressions, reflecting here how very numerous the nation appeared to Solomon; and it is improper and foolish to apply objective standards to them.

After thus voicing his fullest appreciation of what God had done regarding David his father, and revealing what was his own supreme concern in having been made by God his father's successor, Solomon answers God's bidding by making this request: **Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people.** The order of the Hebrew words is expressive: "Now wisdom and knowledge give to me that I may go out in the presence of this people and come in." We have '*aththah*' just as in v. 9. "Wisdom," *chokmah*, is more than "knowledge," *madda*, and we usually have the two with knowledge put first. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge, and so it is here. When knowledge is added to wisdom as here, the two may be meant as

a kind of unit, like good judgment and the material upon which to exercise it. The wisdom and knowledge of Solomon asks for is not vast erudition in what is called "learning" or "science" or "philosophy," but the ability to rule his people with good judgment and true insight and understanding. — For "to go out in the face of this people and to come in" means attendance upon his official duties. Dillmann calls it "the administration of the people's business." To think here of the figure of a shepherd because of the verbs *yatsa'* and *bo'* (both forms in the text are *kal*), as some do, is hardly correct. — Solomon adds the reason for his request: **for who can judge this thy people that is so great?** namely who with his own ability? *Shaphat*, however, means far more than our English verb "to judge" after the manner of a judiciary in court. It really means "to put in order," to help a person get what is his due and his right, and not merely in an outward legal way, but so that righteousness generally shall prevail and produce as its result, *shalom*, security and general satisfaction and contentment. Hence here also "judge this thy people," which does not merely mean deciding legal disputes between individuals, but the managing of the entire people and all its affairs. To judge in this sense embraces all the royal decisions that affect the nation's welfare. In this lofty sense Moses, Joshua, and others down to David were *shophtim*, judges of the people. Now that this great task has devolved upon Solomon he feels his own inability and helplessness. But he does not resort to any substitutes or makeshifts, to some human policy of government, some notion of statecraft, to help him through. He was wise enough at this time already to know that he never would get through by such means. For his duty was not merely to be a good king in the worldly sense of the term, but a king who should keep true to the "mercy" and "promise" granted by God to David, in a royal line

that would rule over God's people for ever. It is thus that he asked for wisdom and knowledge. And therefore God was pleased.

11. And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honor, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king:
12. Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.

First God commends Solomon for his request; then he more than grants it. God, of course, saw into Solomon's heart and beheld that the request Solomon made was genuinely his heart's desire, and not only a shrewdly calculated request put forward merely because it would be agreeable to God. Pious words may be ever so correct in form and sound, ever so holy in men's ears, they cannot deceive God. So God acknowledged the petition as coming from the heart: **Because this was in thine heart.** — And now God names at length what Solomon might have asked, what most men in Solomon's position would have asked, and what in fact kings all over the world have striven for with all their might. First wealth or riches '*osher*, like gold, silver, and all precious things; secondly *n'kasim*, "possessions," here translated **wealth** (*nekes* originally a sacrificed offering, then an offering in general); thirdly **honor** or glory, one of the greatest desires of men, especially of kings. These three the Hebrew seems to group together. We may combine them as follows: 1) great riches of thine own; 2) vast tribute paid thee by others; 3) and as a result lordly exaltation and honor. Next to this

group, and marked by *'eth*: **nor the life of thine enemies**, namely such as Solomon may have had or would yet have; that he might punish or kill them. Hate and revenge have always played a great rôle in the affairs of men, and kings have sacrificed their kingdoms at times to satisfy their lust for the blood of their enemies. Finally God adds, marked by *gam*: **neither yet hast asked long life**, lit. "many days," in which to enjoy the royal power and splendor. For men certainly love life, especially when it is to be spent upon a throne with all the pomp of royalty to make it enviable. God stresses this point by thus detailing it at length. — Also by the emphatic contrast, likewise stated at length: **but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself**, and yet even these not merely selfishly for thyself, but **that thou mayest judge my people over which I have made thee king**, in the mercy and the promise vouchsafed to David thy father.

And now God makes his grant to Solomon, for which he had granted him this vision: **Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee**, *nathun*, the piel participle as a predicate, or better still absolute; and the article with the nouns, so that we can imitate in English: That wisdom and that knowledge (which thou hast asked for) — granted to thee!" — But God is a wonderful Giver indeed. The things Solomon did not ask for God throws in of his great generosity for good measure — with one exception, namely the life of Solomon's enemies. Hate and revenge are not to God's liking, and Solomon, as his name indicates, is meant to be a king of peace. So God adds: **and I will give thee**, beside what thou hast asked, **riches, and wealth, and honor**, these terms as defined above. Long life is not mentioned in Chronicles, but 1 Kgs. 3, 14 has it, coupled with the condition of walking as his father had walked. Chronicles omitted the long life, because Solomon failed to walk in David's

ways and thus made himself unworthy of the gift God would so gladly have bestowed upon him. — While God is giving he surely does give: **such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee**, lit.: “that it was not thus (namely so abundantly) for the kings that (were) before thee,” namely both Saul and David. Note that *’asher* combines with *ken*, and = “as” or “such as.” — But Solomon will not only eclipse the two kings before him by his wealth and honor, but also all that shall come after him: **neither shall there any after thee have the like**, lit.: “and as after thee it shall not be.” No king of Israel was equal to Solomon in earthly wealth and splendor. In Chronicles the comparison with other kings is on the point of riches, wealth, and honor alone, and the kings are those before and after Solomon, namely Israel’s kings. In 1 Kgs. 3, 12 the comparison is on Solomon’s wisdom alone; in that he was to be supreme. Indeed, there has never been as wise a king in the world’s history as was Solomon. In 1 Kgs. 3, 13 the comparison is made separately on riches and honor, and here only with the kings of Solomon’s own day. Thus the narratives do not agree simply because they speak of different points.

SUGGESTIONS

This is not the text on wisdom and knowledge, except only incidentally; for the special text on that subject comes two weeks later in Prov. 2, 1-8, where it properly belongs as one of the gifts bestowed on the Godly Life. In our Old Testament series there simply *must* be one text on money or earthly wealth, etc., and the godly man’s relation to that money, etc. That is the text we have now. As far as wisdom, etc., are concerned in our text this is secondary as illustrating the higher values which count in the Godly Life. Once this is properly grasped, the focal point of the text as here to be used will stand out clearly and the matter of building the sermon greatly simplified.

Young Solomon's Attitude toward Earthly Possessions

Will interest us

As an Example of What Our Attitude Should Be.

When the great opportunity of his life came to obtain all his heart's desire

I. He forgets earthly possessions altogether.

It looked like a great mistake, especially for a young king who certainly would need these things very much; and the worldly heart will always judge so.— But Solomon knew of higher values, God's mercy and promise to his father David, which he desired above all to inherit. These are still the highest treasures for us to-day in as far as they now apply to us all in Christ Jesus.— He who knows and prizes these spiritual treasures aright will always, in the supreme moments of his life, like Solomon, forget money, earthly honor, and the like.

II. When God nevertheless gives him earthly treasures they are thrown in only for good measure.

God made Solomon richer and grander than any king of his people before or after, v. 15, but only as throwing in a handful for good measure when one makes a purchase.— How many would consider it so to-day? Men sell their very souls for money and earthly honor, and Christians are tempted to make the same trade.— But God and Solomon were right. Whatever God gives us of earthly possessions is a minor matter, the handful he throws in with a far greater gift. Of course, they who scorn the greater gift, at best get only this poor handful.

III. Thus God indicates how Solomon and we are to consider and use our earthly possessions.

We are never to live for them, but for God.— We are never to use them except as he directs and approves.— When life is done we are to carry away the mercy and the promise, the earthly things must all remain behind.

Let Wise Solomon Show Us What Money is Worth.

- I. Mighty little*— when a man knows nothing higher.
- II. Less than nothing*— when a man sacrifices what is higher.

- III. *A good deal*—when a man receives it with what is truly higher.
- IV. *Still more*—when a man devotes it to what is highest.

Solomon's Test,

The Night God Said to Him: "Ask What I Shall Give Thee."

- I. *It tested him as to earthly things.*
- II. *It tested him as to spiritual things.*
- III. *He stood the test, and was blessed in the test — could and would you, too?*

Solomon's Choice

Between Wisdom and Wealth.

- I. *He did not choose wealth.*—What if he had? "Take that thine is, and go thy way!" Matth. 20, 14. Many would so choose. Would you?
- II. *He did choose wisdom.*—The wisdom so to live and rule that he might inherit his father's gift from God, mercy and promise. An excellent choice. Would you have made it? Look at what your heart is after now.
- III. *He got both.*—Shrewd on his part? No; sincere. He would have had his heart's desire without the wealth. Would you?—God may or may not give wealth. Remember Prov. 30, 8-9. Are you satisfied when he withholds it? Is the wisdom yours, which prizes the mercy of God and his promise in Christ above all earthly wealth?

THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ps. 32, 1-7

There are five texts in the new group or sub-cycle which we now enter. Together they present to us *the Greatest Gifts of the Godly Life*. Glancing back over the path we have gone there were presented to us:

- 1) *The Vital Features* of the Godly Life;
 - 2) *The Worst Dangers* to the Godly Life;
 - 3) *The Chief Characteristics* of the Godly Life;
- and now
- 4) *The Greatest Gifts* of the Godly Life.

5) *The Blessed Consummation* of the Godly Life is yet to follow in the final group. — The first of the gifts of the Godly Life here to be treated is certainly supreme; it is the forgiveness of sins from Ps. 32, 1-7, our present text. It is followed by the gift of spiritual wisdom from Prov. 2, 1-8. The next gift is God's blessed Word of promise, for which David so fervently thanks God in 2 Sam. 7, 17-29. The fourth gift of the Godly life, in contrast to the wicked who have not this gift, is the assured future or reward allotted to it of God, as shown in Prov. 24, 14-20. The final gift is comprehensive; we may call it all the blessings that go with salvation, as set forth by Ps. 85, 9-14. Let us make a little catalog for the eye:

The Greatest Gifts of the Godly Life

- 1) The forgiveness of sins.
- 2) Spiritual wisdom.

- 3) The blessed Word of promise concerning Christ and the Church.
- 4) An assured future.
- 5) All the spiritual blessings of salvation.

Surely a rich line of subjects, deep as well as varied, and with a new attraction lent by these new texts from the Old Testament. They simply refuse to let the preacher's enthusiasm for his work of preaching flag for a single moment; and the hearer cannot help but find spiritual delight in every new presentation.

The first text on the gifts bestowed on the godly man deals with the one gift that must ever rank as subjectively supreme, namely *the forgiveness of sins*. In the whole after-Trinity series this is our text on *justification by faith alone*, even as also St. Paul used it in his great epistle on justification Rom. 4, 5-8. This is one of the texts in this series which the preacher cannot and will not want to omit. It was old Augustine's favorite Psalm, and he prayed it when he was about to die. Luther declared this to be "an exceptional teaching Psalm, teaching us what sin is, how one may get rid of it and become just in God's sight. For reason does not know what sin is, and thinks to atone for it by works. But here he tells us that even all the saints are sinners and can in no way become holy and blessed except by recognizing and knowing that they are sinners, that without merit or work, by grace alone, they are adjudged righteous before God." When you look into this Psalm you "look into the heart of all the saints." There is no reason to doubt that David composed it. Psalm 51 was written some time during the year of torture following David's sin of adultery; finally when he had found peace Psalm 32 followed. It was written right out of the inmost heart of a man who had tasted all the bitterness of repentance and all the sweetness of pardon. Its superscription is, literally, "A Maskil by

David," and *maskil* means "giving insight," and thus "a doctrinal poem." However this is not the doctrine taught by a learned professor at school, but the life-doctrine of one who had learned all that he teaches in the actual university of experience. This is one of *the* Scriptures to read at confessional services. We have had a great text on repentance, Dan. 9, 15-18, The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity; but that text stopped short with repentance alone and the plea for mercy. In our Psalm we have repentance again — and we cannot say that preaching it twice is too much; but here the text advances from repentance to full forgiveness, and the forgiveness is the chief part. It is often quoted in the Confessions. We quote the Triglotta. "To attain the remission of sins is to be justified according to Ps. 32, 1: Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." P. 143. "But he who boldly comforts himself, clings to the promise of grace, and believes that he has remission of sins and life eternal for Christ's sake, just as Ps. 32, 1 teaches: Blessed" etc. P. 223. "Renewal, sanctification, love, virtue, and good works" must never be drawn into justification, "in order that the honor due him may remain with Christ the Redeemer, and tempted consciences may have a sure consolation, since our new obedience is incomplete and impure." P. 927. "Such confession is contrition in which, feeling God's wrath, we confess that God is justly angry, and that he cannot be appeased by our works, and nevertheless we seek for mercy because of God's promise," elucidating David's confession, p. 283. May God give us grace to preach aright on this great text!

1. **Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.**
2. **Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.**

The Psalm begins **blessed 'ashre**, twice repeated. Every such repetition drives the repeated term in more deeply: Blessed, do not forget it, blessed is the man etc.! Read the comment on 'ashre in Ps. 1, 1, The Sixth, and on Job 5, 17, The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity; that comment applies here. — In these two verses there are three different terms for sin. They deserve study, for the mass of wrong theology, like the mass of superficial religious thinking, is wrong because it starts wrong with a wrong, inefficient, generally superficial, conception of sin. The cure of all Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism is the right doctrine of sin. And when we remember that the bulk of all the thin modernism of to-day is rationalistic Pelagianism gone to seed, we will see that its prevention, its refutation, and its cure lie in correcting the false assumptions regarding sin which form the root of the entire perversion. The term for **transgression** is *phesha'*, from the verb *phasha'*, which means "to rebel," "to put up rebellion," "to revolt" against a government. So the noun originally means "rebellion" or "revolt," and then is softened to "transgression," and the more general notion of "sin." But just try the word in our passage in its original sense: "Blessed is he whose *rebellion* is forgiven," and you will catch something of the deadly guilt that lies in it. Every self-respecting government shoots its traitorous rebels, or hangs them. And rebellion against God is a thousandfold more criminal than rebellion against the best government on earth. "We will not have this man to reign over us!" voices what lies in *phesha'*, Luke 19, 14. No wonder the Lord answered these rebels: "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me," v. 27. — The term translated **sin** is here *chat'ah*, more frequently it is in the form of *chatta'th*, from the verb *chata'*, which means "to miss the mark," "to fail," quite like the New Testa-

ment ἀμαρτία. The mark is set by God's will and law, and "to sin" is to disregard that mark, to set up one of our own. For note carefully, there is no connotation here to the effect that one *tries* to come up to the mark, and misses it because of some weakness or ignorance. In the New Testament ἀμαρτία and ἀνομία are a constant pair, the one defining the other, and ἀνομία is "lawlessness," a criminal's hatred of the law. Just so *chata'*, "to sin," is the criminal refusal to come up to the divinely set mark. All sin centers in the will. As *phesha'* is rebellion against God himself, so *chatta'th* is rebellion against the laws he has made. Put this full meaning into the English word "sin" and see how our text reads. The word "sin" in English is like a worn coin; constant use has erased some of its force. — The third term in our Psalm is **iniquity**, *'avon*, from the verb *'avah*, "to turn aside" and leave the right path or road; Delitzsch makes it *Verkehrung*, *Verzerrung*, *Missetat*. It is deliberate turning off that is meant. The road of right is despised and hated; any other road is demanded, and since right is only one, and can be only one, whatever other road is chosen is contrary to right, and these contrary or wrong roads are many, but all of the same character, iniquitous, the opposite of equity or right. — There are still other terms; for to convey to us the damnable-ness, the enormity, the criminality of sin, many terms are needed. Take the three in our Psalm and draw from these three alone the equation of guilt — then you will approach what David meant and felt by using them.

As he uses three grave terms to convey to us the guilt, so he uses three glorious terms to convey to us the removal of that guilt. Here again the preacher should spend time and effort, both to understand for his own soul as well as convey to other souls just what forgiveness is. The term is used so much, used also as between men themselves, and then in a lower sense,

that our ears hear it and our hearts after all do not perceive it, or perceive it too faintly. — He whose **transgression** is **forgiven**, has the passive participle construct from *nasa'*: “the forgiven one,” or as Koenig states it: “one who has been presented with forgiveness as regards his sin.” That gives us the sense. But *nasa'* means “to take away,” or to carry away. And that is exactly what forgiveness is: to take all a man’s sin and guilt, the whole frightful, stinking, deadly, damnable mess, to remove it from him, and to carry it away so far that nobody shall ever be able to find it, “as far as the east is from the west,” Ps. 103, 12, — take your yardstick and measure the distance! But note the passive idea. No sinner, though he should try ever so hard, can possibly carry away his own sins and come back cleansed from his guilt. No amount of money, no science, no inventive skill, no armies of millions, nor any other earthly power can carry away from the sinner even one little sin and its guilt. The moment the sin is committed the guilt adheres to the sinner as closely as his own nature, and it will remain so to eternity. God’s grace in Christ Jesus alone can take it away.

The blessedness here described is too great, and this thing of being forgiven too absolutely important, to stop with only one term, expressive though it be. David adds: whose **sin** is **covered**, using again the passive participle, construct, *k^esuy*, from *kasah*, to cover: “the covered one in regard to (his) sins.” This is a highly significant description of forgiveness. The sin is so completely covered that God’s own eyes can never see it. There is no idea here of hiding with a cover, which at last will be discovered, pulled off, and all the frightful sin and guilt exposed after all. God would see right through such a cover in the first place. What cover is this that hides sin from God’s own eyes for ever? It is the blood of the expiation on the mercy seat, Rom. 3, 25, where “pro-

pitiation" should be translated correctly by "mercy seat," as Luther did; see the exhaustive references in Cremer, *Bibl.-theol. Woerterb. der Neutest. Graezitaet.* God himself provides this wonderful cover. Let no wise man say that David did not yet, and could not yet, know about this cover. It was prefigured, pictured, promised in the original covenant by all the sacrifices of blood, and by these made effective for every penitent Old Testament believer. When David said "covered" he meant this divine cover; he could mean no other, for there never was any other. Men are constantly seeking another, and persuading themselves they have found another, but God sees right through all their covers. The bigger fools imagine they can fool God without any cover at all, simply by giving their sins some other or milder name.

Still another term is added in this supreme matter of forgiveness: **the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity**, *lo' chashab*, used with two accusatives, one of the person, one of the thing: "not to impute," not to reckon against, not to charge to one's account. It is the same as canceling a debt from the books; like canceling a mortgage, tearing up a note, or giving a receipt of payment received in full — with no payment whatever from the sinner, the *δικαιοσύνη χωρίς ἔργων*. This is the non-imputation set forth at length by Paul in Rom. 4, and mark it, set forth from the Old Testament. In Rom. 4 the very term *οὐ λογίζεσθαι* recurs again and again. Because Christ paid the charge by his atoning blood and death, it can be, and is, remitted for every believer. Note the universality in the two passive participles, made still clearer by 'adam, "the man," in v. 2. Any man, no matter of what nation, type, or character, whose sins the Lord forgives, is blessed. That there is any thought of arbitrariness in the non-imputation is shut out by *Yahveh*; the Lord imputes not, in harmony and agreement with his covenant, for that covenant bears

the very provisions for this non-imputation. — To the three descriptions of forgiveness as constituting a man's blessedness, David now adds an essential characteristic that always marks such a man: **and in whose spirit there is no guile**, "and no guile in his spirit," *r^emiyyah*, deception, treachery. The man who has this blessed pardon is always honest with his own conscience and the Lord. He never makes his sins fewer, lighter, or less damnable than they are. He lets the Lord enlighten his conscience before he lets his conscience speak. He accepts the forgiveness as wholly by grace, as the priceless thing it is, and never begins to discount it or deduct anything from its greatness. By this added clause on "guile" David leads over to the next lines in his Psalm, where we see that he himself tried "guile" awhile.

3. **When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.**
4. **For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me:
my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.**
5. **I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.
I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD:
and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.
Selah.**

Ki at the head of v. 3 can hardly be translated "for," since v. 3 states no reason for what precedes. Our translators took it in the sense of **when**, Latin *cum*, which is correct. The *hiphil* from *ch^aresh* means "to observe silence," and thus the imperfect is translated: **I kept silence**, namely in regard to my sins. The opposite of this silence appears in v. 5, where David says he confessed his sins. This silence is part

of the "guile" he refers to in v. 2. David at first tried to get through without confessing his sins. He knew he had sinned; there really was no question about that. But he hated to humble himself in confession and open acknowledgment. He was king for one thing, the one man at the head of the entire nation, with a dignity, honor, etc. according with his lofty position. He was a godly king too, known to his people as godly and favored of God, a writer of Psalms, an ardent worshipper who was concerned publicly about the tabernacle, the ark, etc. It was no small thing for a man in his position to confess to the gravest kind of law infraction. Then there was the personal reluctance against an open confession, for it is our nature to draw back from self-humiliation and self-abasement, from the frank admission that we are not nearly the people we were considered to be. So David, like many another godly man who has sinned, wrestled with his conscience, tried to quiet its qualms, and for a long while "kept silence." Spurgeon is wrong when he compares the first and the thirty-second Psalm by saying: "The first pictures the tree in full growth, this depicts it in its first planting and watering." No, this depicts it in one of the dangers that comes to it from unreadiness to repent of sin. David *was* a child of God; the question now was, would he *remain* one. His grave sins were notwithstanding all their gravity venial, forgivable; would his refusal to repent make them mortal, deadly to his spiritual life?—David had a terrible time trying to keep on in silence and non-confession: **my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.** *Balah* means "to be worn out," like a garment, and in this sense "to wax old," grow weak and strengthless. He felt like a man growing old in his very bones by something that was inwardly sapping his strength. When there is something weighing heavily on a man's mind and conscience, robbing him of inward peace

and quiet, it actually does help to age him, and he surely feels bowed down and bent and heavy of heart; the buoyancy and spring of youth is taken out of him. — “Through my roaring” is drastic and strong, for *sh’agah* is originally the roaring of a lion, and then means human groaning. This groaning was the result of David’s conflict with his conscience. Of course, he hid it from his companions, at least as much as he could. That groaning was thus pressed inward, which made it only the more distressing; when alone, no doubt, the groans sometimes burst through his lips. Rudolph Kittel’s commentary on the Psalms makes the speaker in this Psalm (who remains nameless) “a sick man,” whose “sickness” plunged him into troubles of conscience. Well, a Psalm like this does show up what a commentator knows of spiritual experience, and Kittel seems to know quite too little. Doebernitz tells us that these expressions of David belong to the limitations of the Old Testament, and yet he is constrained to admit that Luther saw in this Psalm a picture of his own distress. Let us hold fast, the heart of man is ever the same, whether in the old or in the new covenant; so is sin, and so is conscience, and so is the effort to wrestle with conscience — all are the same. The differences are not in the covenants, but in the individuals concerned. Their sense of sin varies, because they are either less or more enlightened by the Word; and thus also the keenness of their conscience varies, because some are sharpened less by the Word than are others. When Doebernitz thinks that no New Testament writer had an experience like David in this Psalm, he overlooks Peter, who denied Christ, though Peter did not embody his feelings in a Psalm; likewise Paul, who called himself chief of sinners, and who wrote Rom. 7. One trouble with us to-day is that our preaching of repentance is too weak, and that means that the sense of sin among our people is too

faint, and their consciences are left too dull. The result is a lot of nominal Christians, to whom David's groanings are a conundrum, who walk in what the dogmaticians call false security, and who perhaps die thus, having gone through nothing but the outward performance of repentance (kneeling, lip-confession), without an inner upheaval that might have let in grace. Here Augustine helps us less than Luther; for Augustine once was a profligate, Luther never was, but Luther tried self-righteousness to the limit, and yet was overcome by the sense of sin, overcome like David, though not sinning as grossly as David.

V. 4 shows what made David so wretched, and then in another figure describes that wretchedness again. **For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, kabad**, "to be heavy" with weight or pressure. The Lord's hand here is not his almighty power, compare Ps. 38, 2; 39, 10; but the hand of the law pressing the conscience. Conscience itself may be wrong, and many people suffer from erring consciences which err in the direction of looseness, indifference, disregard of sin. But David was a godly man, whose thoughts dealt daily with God, and who knew God's law and what it meant to have broken it. So there was this dull, heavy, painful pressure in his heart. And it was there all the time, "day and night," whenever he thought about his sin and tried to talk to the Lord. — The effect was distressing: **my moisture is turned into the drought of summer**, which means: my joys are all wilted and dried up. The niph'al of *haphak* means "to be transformed." What was once like blossoming springtime in David's life became like the dry and dusty heat of midsummer. But *b^e* here is not the same as *l^e*. The latter shows *into* what a thing is changed, the former *in connection with* what it is transformed. So here: "my moisture is transformed *in* the drought of summer," *charbonim*, *Brand-duerre*, burning dryness, the plural for intensification.

The vitality was going out of David's life under this inward burning drought. There was something desiccating his very life-springs. Popularly put: he lost all ambition, zest, and joy in living; nothing appealed to him as before; he was inwardly unstrung. — Verse 3 and 4 are like steps downward in every line and word. The musical key would be minor, and the last lines should be sung with a marked decrescendo. Hence the change marked by **Selah**, the Hebrew *forte*, addressed to the accompanying players on instruments. For the best information on *Selah* see Delitzsch on Ps. 3, 3.

The sadness is ended; the break through to victory accomplished: **I acknowledged my sin unto thee**, the *hiphil* from *yada'*, with the suffix of the person to whom the acknowledgement was made. Thus the soul's effort at keeping silence was broken. The verb, however, does not carry the idea of admit, as if now David at last admitted that he had sinned, whereas before he had denied it. No; the verb means "to let someone perceive, learn, understand, know." So David let God know, i. e. spoke at last, no longer hid in silence. All three terms for sin appear here again, but in this order: sin — iniquity — transgressions (here the plural). — Matching the three statements of pardon in v. 1-2, we now have no less than three statements of confession; and it is interesting to compare here Peter's case, John 21, 15 etc., where three pardons and three confessions also occur. The second statement is synonymous with the first, and thus emphasizes it: **and mine iniquity have I not hid**, *lo'-kissithi* (*kasah*, *piel*), namely covered over, by still keeping silent, thus placing the negative statement pointedly beside the preceding positive. The verb is the same as in v. 1. But there is a mighty difference; in v. 1 the passive points to the covenant Lord as doing the covering — then the sin disappears for good; in v. 5 the active denotes David — when the sinner

covers his own sin, whether by the silence of non-confession, or by anything else, the sin is right there just as before, open in the Lord's eyes. All our coverings are transparent gauze.—What has thus been emphatically stated as a fact, using two historical imperfects, is now described as it actually took place: **I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD**, which Delitzsch puts finely: "I came to the resolution," *Ich fasste den Entschluss: Beichte will ich ablegen ueber meine Uebertretungen dem HErrn*. The hiphil of *yadah*, here with 'ale (poetical for 'al) = *Bekennntnis ablegen ueber*, "make confession on" something. Thus to form the resolution is, of course, also at once to execute it. It is here as in the case of the prodigal, who was stopped with pardon in the middle of his confession and did not get it all confessed as he had resolved. Note that here David makes his confession "unto the Lord." Spurgeon: "Not to my fellow men or to the high priest, but unto Jehovah; even in those days of symbol the faithful looked to God alone for deliverance from sin's intolerable load, much more now" (no; just in the *same* way!), "when types and shadows have vanished at the appearance of the dawn." What confession unto men, and to which men, should be made by a sinner, is a chapter by itself. Yet no confession to men can ever be a substitute for the full confession to the Lord. *Yahveh* is the right term here, not *'Elohim*, if the note of grace is to be emphasized.—At once there was a blessed result: **and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin**. "Thou" is emphatic, *'aththah*, the pronoun, not merely the second person of the verb. Here we have the same verb as in v. 1, namely *nasa'*, "to take away." The confession and the absolution were simultaneous. The faith that resolves to confess to *Yahveh* was justifying faith. To cast our sins in confession upon the Lord is to appeal in faith to his covenant grace and covenant provision for pardon. "Thou forgavest" denotes

the justifying act of the Lord in the court of heaven. All forgiveness in the Old Testament was based on Christ's atonement, just as our forgiveness is now. They of the old covenant connected with Christ through the Word of promise, we of the new through the Word of fulfillment. They had the types and symbols to make clearer what the promise meant, we do not need them having the fulfillment. The doubling is significant: **the iniquity of my sin**, for *'avon* may mean both the misdeed itself of deliberately turning from the road of right, and as here the abiding fact of thus having turned, i. e. the incurred guilt lying permanently in that fact. So we may translate: "the guilt of my sin."—What a blessed termination! Hence once more *forte*: **Selah!**

6. **For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found:
surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.**
7. **Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble;
thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.**

For this naturally takes in both the confession and the pardon as David had experienced them. That experience of his he set down in this Psalm in order to make the benefit of it available for others who might be in a similar position. He thinks of **every one that is godly**, that is a *chasid* who may be in need of *chesed*. The two words are from one root: *chesed*, Ger. *Huld*, so often rendered "mercy" and "lovingkindness"; and *chasid*, Ger. *huldreich*, "pious," "loyal," and thus **godly**.—**Shall pray unto thee** may be read as a future, as our version does, or as an optative: "may pray unto thee," namely in true

confession seeking pardon by faith. David makes the right deduction and generalization from his experience for us all. What God's pardoning grace did for one it will undoubtedly do for another. Men make invidious distinctions in bestowing their grace and favor, for they are all respecters of person, but not God. — **In a time when thou mayest be found** is our bunglesome translation for the neat Hebrew *l'eth metso'*, "at finding time," lit. "at time to find," like Is. 55, 6: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near," see the text for Rogate; also 49, 8. There is a day of grace, a tide which taken at the full leads to forgiveness. Comp. Heb. 3, 7. Let none of us imagine that God's grace is a shoe-rag which one kicks into a corner and then goes back at any time and picks it up again. Nor that *we* are doing God a kindness when we come to confess to him, so that he will be only too glad to await our pleasure. The finding time is our day and hour of grace. It is true that our lives are so shaped that certain times of it are more open to grace than others, or that God's grace is nearer and easier to obtain than at other times. Grace is like a glorious opportunity, which it is a calamity to miss through blindness or other hindrances. They who pray too late are like those who beat upon the door when it is shut. — *Raq* here must mean **surely, certo**, not "only," since it is separated from *'elav* by the *l'* phrase which is equal to "when the great waters inundate." **In the floods of great waters** is figurative for the divine judgment which comes like an inundation in overwhelming masses. It is superficial exposition when the English commentators make these the waters of affliction; for then the promise attached: **they shall not come nigh unto him**, is simply not true. All the godly have their goodly portion of affliction, in fact are marked and distinguished by it; the billows often roll around them, to imitate David's figure. But these

great waters of judgment shall not even touch them, *naga'*, the hiphil: "reach them," *an dieselbigen gelangen*, Luther, giving it exactly. Nor is this a promise attached in general to prayer, as some of the Englishmen read it, but a promise attached to confessional prayer, because that prayer secures absolution, forgiveness, justification. Such a man shall not come into judgment at all, but is passed from death unto life.

This is made plain by v. 7: **Thou art my hiding place**, literally "secrecy," then also used of the means for secreting oneself, "hiding place." David is here praising God for the effects of his pardon. The entire verse is like Paul's more doctrinal statement in Rom. 5, 1 etc. Justification results in peace, security, and thus great joy. David mentions first the security, then the joy. "Hiding place," *sather*, is figurative, so he adds the plain reality: **thou shalt preserve me from trouble**; the Hebrew, however, is more expressive, for *natsar* means "to keep an eye on" somebody, and thus to protect him; and *tsar* (from *tsur*, "to press together") is more like our English "anguish" or "agony." To have the Lord as a hiding place means thus that the Lord keeps his eyes on us that no anguish shall reach us. This, of course, must not be misunderstood of affliction and suffering, but of the crushing agony of unforgiven guilt. To suffer with the assurance that God is our friend and is supporting us in our trial, is nothing for the godly man to shrink from; it is part of his calling. But to have no hiding place when sin finds us out, to have the door of pardon shut and sealed, that is *tsar*, from which God preserve us all. — Now the negative side, what the pardoned godly man is kept from, is lit up by the positive, what the pardoned godly man actually has and enjoys: **thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance**. *Ron* is mighty jubilation, and here we have the plural: "grand jubilations." Also what they are about: *phallet*, the piel infinitive:

“of escaping completely,” or of being rescued. And with these jubilations “thou shalt compass me about,” or *sabab* in the piel: “shalt encircle me.” Judgment like a flood shall come roaring down, and as a result anguish shall crush the guilty; but the pardoned sinner shall sit in his safe hiding place all serene in peace and true security, so that in whichever direction he turns he beholds nothing but causes for the grandest jubilation and joy. This is dramatic indeed, but absolutely and literally true. Do we all realize it? Has the jubilation started in our hearts? Time for the preacher to stir us up to a full realization of what divine pardon actually means. **Selah, forte!** Let the music join in *fortissimo!*

SUGGESTIONS

Here is a text that practically outlines itself. Its theme is hung up in front like the big gilded sign over a great store, and its four great show-windows display what is piled on the counters within. Yes, there are four of these windows, although strangely enough nearly all the preachers that have come past this text have seen only three. In the first we see what forgiveness really means — this is the one that is overlooked, v. 1-2; in the second we see how a man tried to get along without confessing and had no forgiveness, v. 3-4; in the third how that man did confess and obtained forgiveness, v. 5; and in the fourth what a blessed thing that forgiveness proved to be for him. That is the simple analysis of the text itself, as a mere glance already tells. But so many preachers are homiletical traditionalists; for them it is an unwritten but intransgressible law never to have more than three parts to the sermon. So even here where there are four natural parts, they sermonize on three or on two. Not one outline have we seen on this text with more than three parts. — Here is the text's own theme:

“Blessed is He Whose Transgression is Forgiven!”

And here are the text's own four parts, all traditional homiletics to the contrary notwithstanding. Only the children of God are really concerned about this blessedness; so we will follow King David and speak of them alone. But every one of

them, in order truly to grasp, and each one actually to experience, what this blessedness is, must know thoroughly about

- I. *Sin and forgiveness, v. 1-2.*
- II. *Lack of forgiveness, v. 3-4.*
- III. *Obtaining forgiveness, v. 5.*
- IV. *Forgiveness and joy, v. 6-7.*

The first part is the key to the entire sermon. Three sermons might be preached on that first part alone. That does not mean an undue lengthening of the sermon, dwarfing the other three parts. If the preacher feels like that, let him abbreviate the text — there is no ecclesiastical, homiletical, or other law against his doing that. Let him preach only on the first two verses. But if he is balanced enough, he will take the entire text, but he will put into that first part all the essentials in compact form, cutting out all verbiage. David did the thing in only three poetical lines; you can surely do it in say seven or eight minutes. — Of the three part sermons Adolf Stoecker's is the best we have seen:

Is it Well with Your Conscience?

- I. *You are sick if you conceal your sins.*
- II. *You are recovering when you confess your sins.*
- III. *You are well when you have forgiveness of sins.*

G. Mayer's three-part outline also is good:

A King's Own Confessions.

- I. *Once I was a lost sinner.*
- II. *Now I am a pardoned child of God.*
- III. *And I shall ever remain an example of divine grace for others.*

Since in this group of texts we are to treat of two of the greatest gifts of the Godly Life, and the very word "forgiveness" has the idea of a gift in it, we may certainly outline the sermon accordingly:

King David's Greatest Gift from God.

He realized just how great it was:

- I. *When he looked at the gift itself, v. 1-2.*
- II. *When he lost the gift for a time, v. 3-4.*
- III. *When he found the gift again, v. 5.*
- IV. *When he reveled in what was attached to the gift. v. 6-7.*

The last outline keeps the historical aspect of the Psalm, and thus is objective throughout (although the subjective side, as pertaining to you and me, is easily added); but one can put the subjective feature into the outline itself, and very often this is preferable.

**God's Greatest Gift, the Forgiveness of Sins:
What Does it Mean to You?**

- I. *Do you know what it is?*
- II. *Have you ever lost it?*
- III. *Did you ever find it again?*
- IV. *Is it bringing you all its joy?*

Let us add finally, that instead of analyzing this text according to the contents of its verses, like many another text we may analyze it according to its great concepts or thoughts. These are: sin — justification — confession — refusal to confess — judgment — security from judgment — joy of security. This is certainly grand sermon timber, and it ought to construct the finest kind of a sermon house. Various combinations can be made. Let us start with sin:

- 1) Sin by itself means judgment.
- 2) Sin confessed means pardon.
- 3) Sin pardoned means safety and joy.

Is it hard to find the proper theme for that arrangement? Well, try it. — You can pick up the whole chain by lifting the pardon link (justification); try that. Several other links will give good results. Here is one:

Why Does the Child of God Feel so Happy and Secure?

- I. *He knows better than to hide his sins.* David tried that.
- II. *He humbly acknowledges his guilt.* He learned that from David.
- III. *He found the most blessed gift of pardon.* It was just what David said it was when he found it.
- IV. *That is why the child of God feels so happy and secure.* And you will feel that way too, just like David did, with no judgment able to touch you, and your soul full of songs of deliverance.

THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Prov. 2, 1-8

That Wisdom in Proverbs is identical with the Logos of the New Testament, all Jewish-Alexandrine-Philonic speculation to the contrary notwithstanding, has been set forth in the introduction to Prov. 9, 1-10 for The Second Sunday after Trinity, where also under v. 1 of the exegesis all necessary information is given on the mashal proper and on the mashal-song, the latter being the form in which our text is cast.

We are dealing with the second gift bestowed upon the godly man, namely *the gift of wisdom*. How Wisdom as the Logos and wisdom as our possession and guide in life are linked together 1 Cor. 1, 24 explains very simply: "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks (we preach) Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." And v. 30-31: "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." So also Col. 2, 3: "In whom (Christ) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." — The idea which our text is to convey is simply this: the godly man has made contact with Wisdom (Christ) — note the paternal address "my son"; now that contact is to produce its full intended effect, namely to fill the godly man's heart with wisdom and knowledge (all mediated for him by Christ); and this wisdom and knowledge is to guide the godly man in the paths of righteousness, safety, peace, etc., and thus lead him to all that is highest and best in this life (away from all that is

bad, with its concomitant misery and death, and to life eternal hereafter. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God," James 1, 5; but note v. 6: "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." — Our text is highly instructive in letting us see, first of all, just how a godly man is able to get this wisdom (v. 1-4), then by stating what this wisdom consists in (v. 5-6), and finally telling us what this wisdom profits him who has it.

- 1 **My son, if thou wilt receive my words,
and hide my commandments with thee;**
2. **So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom,
and apply thine heart to understanding;**
3. **Yea, if thou criest after knowledge,
and liftest up thy voice for understanding;**
4. **If thou seekest her as silver,
and searchest for her as *for* hid treasure; —**

These four verses are one extended conditional clause, leading up to the main clause in v. 5-6. That is the grammatical structure. But this extended "if" clause, or chain of "if" clauses, really presents to us:

The Way to Divine Wisdom.

In this presentation of the "Way" there is, first of all, the *objective* designation of wisdom itself. It is stated here only formally, that is without as yet telling us in what this wisdom actually consists. That is done in the main clauses which follow. For in the four preliminary verses the stress lies, not as yet on what wisdom really is (which is held in reserve), but on the *subjective* attitude and actions of the godly man who would acquire this wisdom. So we have in the "if" clauses these *objective terms*: 1) my words; 2) my commandments; 3) wisdom; 4) understanding; 5) knowledge. They are really all just synony-

mous terms for the general concept "wisdom." What they really signify and contain, we shall be told presently. But while these five terms are practically one thing and thus all lie on a level, a string of *subjective activities* is combined with them, which in the nature of the case are necessary for the godly man to exercise in obtaining the divine wisdom. And these activities are not all on the same plane; they are like ascending steps, rising one above the other; or like efforts that constantly increase in intensity. But the godly man does not have to wait until he has reached the top of the ladder before he can acquire any wisdom at all, nor is it there by a supreme effort only that he is able to pluck the coveted fruit from the tree. No; the godly man's efforts begin to net him results almost from the start; and as he follows up the steps here built for him, he gets an ever fuller measure of this wisdom. The underlying assumption, however, is that he will never be content to pause on the first, or on any intermediate step, but will press on till he reaches the top. It is somewhat like going to school. The pupil passes from one grade to another, learning something in each, but neither he nor his parents (note in the text "my son") are satisfied until he has finished the last grade. Here is the ascending scale: 1) receive; 2) hide with thee; 3) incline thine ear; 4) apply thine heart; 5) if thou criest; 6) liftest up thy voice; 7) seekest; 8) searchest. Stoecker makes seven steps (combining the last two: 1) *avida auditio*; 2) *firma retentio*; 3) *attenta meditatio*; 4) *indubitata adscientio*; 5) *debita humilitio*; 6) *devota Dei invocatio*; 7) *indefessa scrutatio*. This is a fine a psychological scale as could be constructed, yet it is more, it is spiritual psychology. And to put it thus, especially in verse, laying one beautiful stone upon another, without a fault or error, is just a little more than any man could do "with his own unaided strength" of mind; it certainly required

Inspiration, and evidently an Inspiration in the very words chosen and put down. One of the plainest proofs of Inspiration is the simple comparison of inspired writing with uninspired writing. Wise Socrates and his reporter Plato, in their very finest passages, never even approached the subject dealt with in our text, and in the subjects they did treat they just show us nothing but brass — indeed beautifully polished in spots, but always the brass of human ideas, no more, never the burnished gold of divine, spiritual understanding. When you read Plato's best, you feel it could be improved even in form, diction, and the way of putting his (human) thought. How loose some of his sentences are. His long periods, how merely literary. And so in regard to other points. When you read Ps. 1 or 23, or 103 (to mention only these, or our present text, you at once feel and know, that you cannot improve even in the matter of one word. Plain historical narratives in both Testaments, compared with similar secular writings, carry the evidence of their Inspiration on the surface in the same way. To be sure, the writer of our verses on the Way to wisdom had had his experience of that Way, and wrote from that experience. But even a godly man's finest and fullest spiritual experience may be more or less imperfect in itself, because of the marring influence of sin still in and around him; and then the reproduction of that experience, or the utilization of it in writing it down with pen and ink, is not a matter that can be done by even the most skilful writer so as to be perfect in every word and term. We see it constantly in the pulpit and in religious books. But when these inspired writers used their pens, the result was flawless. It has stood so for ages, and will stand so till the end of time. Let us study Inspiration also on lines like this; it will certainly be a satisfying study in more ways than one.

A good deal lies in the address: **My son**. Wisdom personified* is using that address. The divine Master is speaking to one who would be, and has begun to be, his disciple. And here take "disciple" in its true sense, one who imbibes, not merely so much learning, but the very spirit of his master, here of Wisdom, the divine Master himself. "My son" is restrictive; it applies to those only who are and mean to be among the godly in the following of the Lord. All others turn away from this Master, and choose other teachers. But "my son" means still more. It points to the proper attitude of him who would go to Wisdom's school. A true son trusts his father and trustfully listens to him. He bows filially to the authority of his father, who desires only what is best for his son. No one can receive wisdom who does not come as a son to Wisdom as his father. To take a different attitude is to shut out wisdom from the start. Wisdom instructs no bastards. Yes, there is authority here, the true, safe, blessed, helpful authority of God. He who would be his own authority, or who prefers another authority, is properly named not wise, but a fool; and there are many fools in the world. So the first word is like a master musician striking a perfect chord to begin with. Only *beni* — that is all — and yet how much lies in the two little syllables!

Now let us study briefly the objective terms for the wisdom we are to acquire. First **my words**, *amaray*, which means "my sayings," or what I say to thee. Note that this paternal instructor does not use here *d'barim*, for this term connotes too much intellectual knowledge intended for logical thinking. A teacher of philosophy may employ *d'barim* in his

* *Chokmah* is feminine in Hebrew; in our exposition we here speak of Wisdom as masculine, simply because Wisdom, in the last analysis, means the Logos, Christ, and to use two genders, the feminine for the Wisdom, and the masculine for Christ, causes confusion.

class-room or on the lecture platform. Here Wisdom is talking to a son privately, *'amaray* are the words of fatherly concern, conveying from a father's to a son's heart what that fatherly heart knows is best for the son's whole heart and life, the divine wisdom of life imparted with loving intent. "My words" mean authority indeed; to reject that authority would be baseness indeed. But this is the authority of love and deepest personal concern, coming from the very highest source. There is only proper response to these "words," namely "to receive" them: **if thou wilt receive.** — Secondly **my commandments**, *mitsvothay*, here paired with "my words." Please put away all ideas of legalism and work-righteousness because neither Proverbs nor any other book of the Bible teaches anything of the kind. The paternal "words" of Wisdom are not directed merely to the intellect, but to the heart and will, and thus take the form of commands. If you want a true interpretation of these commands, then look at what Jesus says to his disciples regarding his ἐντολαί, for instance John 14, 15 and 21; 15, 10 and 12; also what John writes of them, 1 John 2, 7 etc.; 3, 22 etc., and oftener. They are really behests; we might call them Gospel commandments, for they include the commandment to repent, to believe, to receive grace and forgiveness, and then also the commandment to love and lovingly to obey. As far as the law of Moses is concerned it is the use of it for the child of God that is meant, by it to deepen his repentance, and by it to learn the ways that please God. Therefore the verb here is: **hide my commandments within thee.** Funny, the old Jews tied them on their foreheads and on their hands; they were meant for a better place. — Thirdly we have **wisdom**, *chokmah*, as the power to enter into us and control our lives. Spiritual wisdom is the ability to use divine truth for the purpose for which it was revealed, namely to put us into the right

attitude toward God, our own lives, the men about us, and all things that occur, so that we live and die as the enlightened children of God. Wisdom is the will of God governing our wills so that we attain what the will of God in mercy, grace, and goodness has set for us to attain. Christ is made unto us wisdom. As he is the embodiment of truth and wisdom, and therefore Wisdom personified, so Christ when received into our hearts fills us with the light of truth and the power to follow it, which is spiritual wisdom. James 3, 13-18 describes this wisdom and its opposite, the wisdom that descendeth not from above. Paul does something of the same thing in 1 Cor. 1, 20; 2, 6 and elsewhere. Wisdom expects of her "son"; that **thou incline thine ear** unto wisdom, eagerly absorbing it from Wisdom's lips. — Paired with "wisdom" is **understanding**, *th^ebunah*, comprehension, hard to distinguish from **knowledge**, *binah*, insight, which has been fully characterized in Prov. 9, 5, The Second Sunday after Trinity, which please see. *Binah* is "knowledge" in the sense of knowing, seeing into, distinguishing; while *th^ebunah* is "understanding" a thing as known, as seen into, as actually distinguished. "Wisdom" presupposes "understanding" and "knowledge," namely the inner illumination growing out of the spiritual life, which clearly sees truth as it is, falsehood as it is, good and evil as they actually are, sees them not with the eye alone, but with the heart, and thus in the seeing (*binah*), and after seeing (*th^ebunah*), is drawn to truth, right, goodness, godliness and repelled by falsehood, wrong, evil, ungodliness. As the "son" of Wisdom thou wilt **apply thine heart to understanding**, not merely thine head; **thou criest after knowledge**, so anxious to obtain it; and **lifest up thy voice for understanding**, imperatively demanding it. — Take the five terms together and you have what Wisdom calls "wisdom" for us, namely the wisdom that is from above, which is first

of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, James 3, 17.

The way to this "wisdom" is sketched by the verbs which in part we have already touched. First there is simple *receiving*. Contrast this just for a moment with the top of the scale, namely crying after, and searching for, in v. 3 and 4; and you see the ascending scale. *Laqach* simply means "to receive" or accept what is offered, namely what Wisdom desires to impart with tender love and concern. That is the start in receiving all spiritual wisdom. It is given, and as a gift it is accepted. So the child receives it from father and mother, the catechumen from the pastor, the disciples from Jesus. Do not bother here about the false imitators of this process; just read and compare Wisdom's invitation and "the foolish woman's" invitation in Prov. 9, 4 and 16, and then pass on. But note, this verb, **thou wilt receive**, means that Wisdom's paternal authority is acknowledged, that like Mary at Jesus' feet we sit and drink in what Wisdom says. It means trust and confidence, no more doubt, suspicion, criticism, skepticism. It means the childlike attitude which Jesus commends, Matth. 18, 3-4. Many remain fools and perish as fools, because they would not in childlike faith "receive" the words of wisdom, happiness, and life. — Receiving is intensified by *hiding* what is received: **hide within thee**, namely "my commandments." The receiving thus is real, for the thing received is not soon dropped or cast away as valueless or undesirable; but is safely stored away, and in the best possible place, "within thee," namely in the heart. The blessed behests are put within to be tried out, to be carefully and faithfully used. If they were merely in the head (memory, intellect) they would not really be "within thee"; but in the heart they will begin to control thought, word, and deed. So that is the second step. — Then the

third and the fourth, which really pair with the first and second, only both are plainly advances over these. So that **thou incline thine ear**, is more than just passive receiving. The Hebrew is stronger, for the hiphil of *qashab* means "to make (the ears) heed," make them pay attention, namely to get by close attention all the paternal words spoken by Wisdom in regard to wisdom, and not to lose a single one of them. Here we have *eager attention*, the godly son himself making this effort on his part to get wisdom. He has begun to realize the value of what he is getting, and this is his response. Just pass out dollar bills from the pulpit, instead of words of wisdom, and the church will not hold the crowds, nor will there be any sleepers in the audience; but pass out words of divine wisdom, and there will be both empty seats and inattentive listeners. *L*^e with *haqshib* makes this a result clause, and the finite verb following, *thatteh*, continues the result clause. — The ear is outward, its inward counterpart is the heart; and as inclining the ear matched receiving (v. 1), so *applying the heart* matches hiding within thee (v. 1). **Apply thine heart** to understanding; *natah leb* in the hiphil means to stretch or bend the heart in a certain direction. This indicates strong personal interest; and the interest is now directed to *th^ebunah*, to what the heart has acquired by having inclined the ear. That interest is fully justified, for the possession of real understanding is a treasure the heart is interested in to use for the valuable results it will furnish in life. It is like so much gold in our hands; we are interested in all that it will enable us now to purchase. — The last two verbs denote the first marked activities on the part of the son and pupil of Wisdom in acquiring wisdom. But these activities, namely inclining the ear and applying the heart, are still restrained and quite silent; they will soon grow stronger; they will turn into *crying after* knowledge, *qara'* with *l*^e, calling

to her to come. This is the desire and effort to get more and more insight, *binah*. **Thou criest after knowledge** means like a child that is hungry for food. — And even this crying will be intensified into *loud crying*: **thou liftest up thy voice** for understanding, namely for the treasure of *th^ebinah*; lit. “givest thy voice.” This brings out fully the determination to secure more and more of this incomparable gift. In both verbs, crying after and lifting up the voice, there is implied that the godly man knows perfectly that he himself cannot produce this insight and comprehension. No philosophy that he can construct will produce it. He must get wisdom from without. A beneficent Giver must bestow it from above. James 1, 5-6: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.” James speaks of confident asking; our text speaks first of requesting, and secondly of loud pleading. Of course, the implication is that neither will be in vain. — But there are still two more steps. Invoking knowledge and lifting up the voice in an earnest plea for understanding merely involves the use of the organs of speech and necessarily expects some one else to hear and bring us knowledge and understanding. More can be done by the godly man; he can himself go after these treasures. Keeping in the figure of a treasure we can say that he will also use his feet and his hands. First then is *searching*: **thou seekest her as silver**, *biqqesh*, piel, “to seek” or hunt so as to get hold of. “Silver” may mean the precious metal, or the money made out of it. As silver is valuable in earthly affairs, so wisdom is valuable in spiritual affairs. There is a restraint in putting only silver here, and not at once gold, because there is still one more step to register in the acquirement of precious wisdom by the godly man. Silver and money does not come to us merely by our

requesting or shouting for it; one must go after it and by his own efforts acquire it. So the godly man seeks it. And he knows, let us say it at once, both where to seek and how, so that his seeking will not be in vain. The place is the Word of God. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire," Rev. 3, 18, using the figure of gold; and Is. 55, 1 using the figure of food. — The final step is akin to the one just described: **and searchest for her as for hid treasure.** Here is gold and more than gold, all manner of precious stones, rubies, diamonds, etc. Job 28, 18: "For the price of wisdom (is) above rubies." Prov. 3, 15: "She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her." Prov. 20, 15: "There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel." *Matmon* is sunken or buried treasures; and here we have the plural. In ancient times treasures were often buried, especially in troublous times, and when the owners were killed or had died those who knew about their wealth tried to find the hidden hoard. This is the figure here used. In Matth. 13, 44 Jesus used this figure in a parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hid in a field"; only Jesus used it in another way, namely that a man finds it accidentally, without knowing anything about it in advance. In our text the son of Wisdom knows about the buried treasure, and thus goes after it, *chaphash*, "to search for." So this figurative expression for securing wisdom means *prolonged, arduous, careful searching*. Buried earthly treasures are often not found, though men know of them and use all efforts, even digging up the soil, loosening stones in walls, etc. The hidden treasure of wisdom can and will be found by those who search diligently. Seek and ye shall find. Yes, there are treasures of wisdom which do not lie on the surface, which are not handed to

us on a platter, which we must dig up out of the Word ourselves. The Lord put them where only they will find them who think them valuable enough to merit earnest search.

What a treasure lies right here before us in this description of the way to obtain wisdom! One can read hurriedly over these brief lines (preachers have done it in preparing sermons), and never see the treasures here hidden. But he who digs, finds. — But all these four verses are conditional. They begin with *'im*, if, and to v. 1 v. 2 is linked by *l^e*; and continue in v. 3 with the strengthened “if,” *ki 'im*, which here cannot be adversative, because of the sense, but means: **yea, if**; and v. 4 again has the plain “if,” *'im*. We may say, then, that these are *the conditions* for obtaining wisdom. But they are addressed to Wisdom’s son, not to the ungodly and unregenerate; to one who has entered Wisdom’s house by her call and grace, Prov. 9, 1 etc.; to one who is beginning the Godly Life. Here is the course which he must take to progress properly in that Life, and to attain its highest blessings. That means that by the help of Wisdom, who even here is helping her son, he can indeed fulfill as these conditions, even the last. These “ifs,” however, are like questions: My son, wilt thou do what here I say to thee? Thus these “ifs” are like strong impulses, moving him to comply, stirring him up to prove himself a true son of Wisdom. And yet these “ifs” also reckon with the sad possibility that this son may prove undutiful, unfilial, unfaithful, recreant to his birth and royal position. Instead of acting like a prince in the regal home of Wisdom, he may turn out a bastard, no son at all, who must be thrown out to take the part he has chosen with fools. Let the preacher make full use of these “ifs.” — We now come to

The Sum of Divine Wisdom

We may say that wisdom has already been elucidated by four other terms, and in explaining all five terms something necessarily had to be said in regard to what they contain. Now, however, Wisdom herself gives us her own sum of wisdom:

5. **Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD,
and find the knowledge of God.**
6. **For the LORD giveth wisdom:
out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.**

In one word, the sum of divine wisdom is "the fear of the LORD." Or in two words, "the fear of the LORD and the knowledge of God." There is no wisdom like unto this wisdom. And we have seen how the gift of this wisdom is obtained by the godly man. — The main clause, after the subordinate conditional clauses reads: **Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD.** The verb *bin-bun* has the same idea as the noun *binah*, insight, which we have had in v. 3, namely "to distinguish," or "to see into." The idea, of course, is by no means merely intellectual insight, but the spiritual understanding and insight of the heart. It is the insight of actual living experience. For no man knows what the fear of the Lord is except by actually having this fear and living under its control. Dogmatical, doctrinal, and devotional books may tell us what the fear of the Lord is, and they are all valuable means to an end. But they are not the end, only the means. Many things in our earthly life can be known only by actual experience; and of religion this is doubly true. We have already discussed *yir'oth Yahveh*, **the fear of the LORD**, in several places, particularly in connection with Prov. 9, 10 for The Second Sunday after Trinity. Reread that discussion. We

have but little to add. To fear *Yahveh* (which is the significant title here used) means so to reverence the Lord of the covenant that we will abide in that covenant, its grace, pardon, countless blessings, and in no way depart from that covenant and go counter to its great author, and lose any of its gifts and blessings. It ought no longer to be necessary for us here to hammer on the distinction of filial ("my son," v. 1) and slavish fear, or the fear of a child of God and of a wicked transgressor of God's law. The theological wisdom which reads "the fear of the Lord" in a legalistic sense, in spite of the significant *Yahveh*, and then sets up the claim that such legalistic fear is the sum and substance of the old covenant religion, and that this was altered in the New Testament, is so plainly spurious that no evangelical preacher should for one moment entertain such ideas. The same fear of the Lord runs through the New Testament: Matth. 10, 28; Luke 12, 5; Acts 10, 2 and 22 and 35; 13, 16; 13, 26; Rom. 11, 20; 2 Cor. 7, 1; Eph. 5, 21; Col. 3, 22; 1 Pet. 1, 17; 2, 17; Rev. 11, 18; 14, 7; 19, 5. It is exhibited throughout both covenants in any number of ways by God's children; and not to fear the Lord is the great sin both of unbelief and disobedience. "To fear God is simply to serve God with the heart inwardly, and with our doing outwardly, and this consists in holding him in honor and reverencing him, doing and omitting nothing save what we know is well-pleasing 'to him.'" Luther. Because the holy God is *my God*, and I his *child*, therefore I fear him. *Sic clare definiri potest filialis timor, ubi fides consolatur et sustentat pavidum cor. Servilis timor, ubi fides non sustentat pavidum cor.* "Thus filial fear can be clearly defined as such anxiety as has been connected with faith, i. e. where faith consoles and sustains the anxious heart. It is servile fear when faith does not sustain the anxious heart." *Triglotta*, p. 261.

So also it has well been said: "Servile fear fears when God comes; childlike fear fears when God leaves."

As wisdom's sum and substance is the fear of the Lord, so also it is **the knowledge of God, *da'ath 'Elohim***. We would be inclined to reverse these two, and connect fear with Elohim and knowledge with Yahveh, and then we certainly would spoil things. *Da'ath* means perception, knowledge gained by experience, while *binah* means insight. Thus also the term "knowledge" came to be deepened. In English we are confined to one term, in Greek and in German there are two: γνώσις and ἐπίγνωσις; *Kenntnis* und *Erkenntnis*. The deeper knowledge is that of the heart, and so the word is often used as practically equivalent to faith: "This is life eternal, that they may *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17, 3. This is because knowledge is an integral part of faith, and thus may stand for the whole of faith. *'Elohim* as the object of this knowledge naturally includes more, as also it should, than his covenant grace. — The verb *matsa'*, "to find," connects directly with the verbs seek and search in the preceding verse and the idea of silver and hid treasure. The heavens declare the glory of God, and yet some men do not find him. Nature speaks with a thousand voices and even uses object lessons to bring some measure of knowledge to man, and Wisdom adds her words and commandments, but as Paul tells us, men's unrighteousness and ungodliness close their hearts, so that they never "find" the wisdom that is from above, the heart-knowledge of God. — As finding connects with seeking and searching in v. 5, so in v. 6 giving connects with finding, and knowledge (*da'ath*) repeats the same term in v. 5. This is the chain idea that we met in Job 5, 17-26, The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity. **For the LORD giveth wisdom** elucidates how the finding of the knowledge of God takes place,

and also how Wisdom's son shall come to understand the fear of the Lord. It is by no means an accident. Our gracious Lord puts wisdom in our way, and thus we find and get it. Back of all spiritual finding is the divine giving. And every time we read the verb "give" of the Lord, let us not fail to see the grace that is back of the giving. — How the Lord's giving is done, what the manner of it is, the next line adds: **out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.** It is by means of his Word. But note that here in v. 6 all the expressions for wisdom are gathered together; there is "wisdom, knowledge, and understanding," and in the phrase "out of his mouth" we have a plain reference to "my words" and "my commandments" in v. 1 — thus all five terms are here combined. That means that every part and every form of wisdom is "out of his mouth," and from no other source. No matter whether it be called "wisdom," or whether it be viewed as "knowledge" or as "understanding," or whether it be in the form of "my words" (spoken in confidence) or "my commandments" (the Lord's Gospel behests), they always flow from his mouth and therefore are his Word. And by means of this Word they are given to us, and in and through this Word are found by us. — But **out of his mouth** contains much more, namely first *Revelation* and in addition *Inspiration*. Divinely chosen men received the revelation, the Lord made himself known to them, appeared to them, spoke directly to them, sent his messengers with his words unto them. Thus the mouth of the Lord communicates with us. That word "mouth" is strongly anthropomorphic, for God is a spirit with no physical mouth or lips. So "mouth" means his power of communicating to men his will and words. But the Lord who thus directly communicated with certain chosen persons meant that communication for all men, and therefore he insured the perfect transmission of his reve-

lations by certain chosen persons. He did this by inspiring them both to speak orally, and especially also to write. This is Verbal Inspiration, namely a divine enabling to state exactly what the Lord wanted them to state, and in the very way he wanted it stated. The Lord so controlled all the spiritual and natural faculties of these chosen men in the reproduction of his words that they put down in writing just what he wanted put down and in the way he wanted it. He suggested to their minds and spirits the substance to be written (*suggestio rerum*) as well as the expression adequate to that substance (*suggestio verborum*). He so guarded every word they wrote for him that not one sentence or expression should be incorrect or contain a false implication, and that not one word should be wrong or even inadequate. In this to us so mysterious influence there was nevertheless full and free play for the individuality of each person thus divinely employed, so that each used his intellect and will, his natural and acquired abilities, even his fund of words and ways of speaking with freedom. Yet the result was in each case exactly what the Lord wanted it to be. If there had been no such Verbal Inspiration it would have been useless for the Lord in the first place to give knowledge and wisdom "out of his mouth" to a certain few men; for only these few would then really have had it "out of his mouth," and all others would have had to take it "out of their mouths," as best they might be able to repeat it. Being sinful, imperfect, inclined to many errors, forgetful, prone to misunderstand, etc., their transmission would accordingly have been faulty. See how men to-day pervert even the perfect, inspired Word! The Lord, however, who prized the wisdom he transmits to us, above rubies, fine gold, hid treasures, and all other values, thought sufficiently of this wisdom to transmit it to all of us in equally perfect form, just as it came originally "out of his mouth." Read

the Word — there *his* mouth speaks to you. Thus the Lord found a way to make his mouth reach you and me. It is a wonderful way, it could not be otherwise. Fools shake their heads, doubt, deny, and in their fool's wisdom dictate how they think the Lord should or did proceed. The sons of Wisdom praise and rejoice, and by the Word verbally inspired let "the mouth" of the Lord speak to their minds and hearts day by day.

The Effect of Divine Wisdom

The effect of divine wisdom is one of the mighty motives which should drive us to acquire this wisdom. This effect is here stated first objectively, then subjectively at length; objectively, in what the Lord is and does for us through the wisdom bestowed on us, subjectively in what we ourselves are and do by means of the wisdom that is ours. Perhaps because the sermon would be likely to grow too long our text stops short with the objective effect. Since the text is to show us one of the greatest gifts of the Godly Life, to stop with the objective side of the effect is preferable.

7. **He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous:**

he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

8. **He keepeth the paths of judgment,
and preserveth the way of his saints.**

The first effect is this: **He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous.** *Tsavan*, "to conceal," here by metonymy means "to store up," as one saves and secretly stores away valuables. The adjective *yashar* really means "erect"; substantivized and in the plural: "the righteous," the upright, i. e. who do not stoop and sneak in base ways. Here the term evidently

designates those who are upright and honest in accepting the divine wisdom. By imparting more and more wisdom to their upright hearts the Lord "lays up," or stores up, for them *thushiyyah* (probably from *yesh*), which Koenig renders in general with *Daseinsfoerderung*, and for our passage with *Beistand*. The idea is: that which furthers our existence. The translation in our version "sound wisdom" is interpretative rather than linguistic. Yet it is liable to confuse and darken the sense, for the thought would be that the Lord by wisdom stores up for us "sound wisdom." No; by means of the wisdom he bestows upon us he stores up in our hearts what will further, aid, support our existence. The opposite idea would be: he who has nothing of this wisdom is left bare of any genuine aids to his existence and life. The practical side of this objective effect of wisdom in an upright man's life can be made very vivid in preaching. For what has a man who is without the divine wisdom? Nothing but a few self-made ideas and human supports, all of which break down in the final test, and cannot prevent his existence from finally becoming a total failure or wreck. The sons of Wisdom (note the advance in this plural *yesharim*, "the upright ones") are in a different position entirely. They may lack many earthly things, but they obtain an increasing store, which cannot be taken from them, of genuine life supports, which make their lives, even if very humble, a true success in God's eyes, like a shock of corn ascending in its season, Job 5, 26 (see this text, The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity). — The negative side of the objective effect of wisdom is placed beside the positive: **he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly**; only "he is" should be canceled, and "a buckler" should be read as an apposition to *thushiyyah*, "life-furtherance." The idea is that this "life-furtherance" acts also as a shield to ward off everything that is injurious to the life. Those

without such a shield are left abjectly exposed to all such injuries. The statement is broad; with nothing named that this buckler wards off, all injurious forces and weapons are included. "They that walk uprightly," *thom*, "perfectly," is a synonym for the preceding term "the righteous." Perhaps we should say that *thom* does not mean or imply sinlessness (perfectionism). The "perfect" walk and life includes daily repentance from sin, and this repentance is a part of that "life-furtherance" which as a "buckler" keeps the sons of Wisdom from the deadliest of all injuries, namely unforgiven sin.—The further objective effect of God's wisdom in the heart is this: **He keepeth the paths of judgment.** But *l^e* with the infinitive of *natsar* indicates a purpose clause, appended to the previous clause: "he layeth up . . . in order to keep the paths of judgment." And '*orach* is "a trodden path," one made by using and kept by using. "The paths of judgment," *mishphat*, are the trodden ways marked by the Lord's norm of right. This indicates how *n^etsor* (*natsar*) is meant: "he keepeth" these trodden paths, watches them so that they remain intact, and do not by non-use become obliterated. By implanting wisdom in our hearts the Lord keeps the ways of living according to the divine norms of right from being obliterated by the folly and wickedness of men. It is remarkable, this way of preserving right among men, by actually having men live right in a sin-infested world. It shows, of course, the power of God's grace, truth, and Word, that thus in actual living examples they are able to maintain themselves against all hostile forces. But it is really because God himself is back of his grace, truth, and Word.—The second line extends the thought of the first synonymously: **and preserveth the way of his saints.** *Derek* is the designated way, here as designed and laid down for his saints by the Lord. In the Hebrew the finite verb *yishmor* following the in-

finitive with *l^c*, namely *lintsor*, continues the purpose clause; so here read: "in order to keep . . . and to preserve" etc.; note the similar construction in v. 2. "The paths of judgment" and "the way of his saints" are of course synonymous, but the differences are worth noting: "the paths" are many, pointing to the different conditions and incidents in which "judgment" is to be exercised; "the way" is one, for all his saints follow one course or direction in all that they do. In "the paths of judgment" the designation of them by "judgment" is objective for us; while in "the way of his saints" the genitive makes the expression subjective for us, it is *our* way. In Ps. 32, 6 (for the preceding Sunday) *chasid*, "every one that is godly," is the same term here in the plural, *chasidim*, translated "saints"; compare the Psalm passage. These godly, loyal persons are "his," the Lord's. He knows them all and they are precious in his sight. So also he knows their way, Ps. 1, 6; and he watches that way, so that he may preserve it for them and all who succeed them to walk upon. Satan would destroy it, the world hates it, the Lord preserves it, we walk upon it and love it. And one of the effects of the gift of wisdom to us is the preservation of that way.

Thus the objective effect of the gift of wisdom to the sons of Wisdom is twofold: 1) a store of power is given to them to further their lives and to ward off everything injurious; 2) and the paths of judgment and the way of godliness is concretely kept and preserved in this sinful world for them to walk upon, and for others to join them in doing likewise. In the rest of the chapter we have a full outline of the subjective effects of possessing the divine wisdom.

SUGGESTIONS

Someone has called this "a mighty text," and he was right. It ought to be a delight to preach on it when its contents are properly grasped. It is like a diamond, every facet ground most exactly. It is a structure in perfect proportion, even to the form of versification used. The text challenges the preacher to spare no pains in an effort to construct an equally perfect sermon. When this perfect structure of the text itself is traced out we have the text's own outline. Of course this will be analytical. All that is needed is a theme, and even that may be taken from the text:

"The Lord Giveth Wisdom."

I. *What wonderful giving!*

A giving that would stimulate to receiving; then to hiding within us; then inclining the ear; then to applying the heart; then to praying for, and praying more earnestly; then to seeking for, and searching still more earnestly.— Will you let his giving so stimulate you?

II. *What a wonderful gift!*

The fear of the Lord, and the knowledge of God.— His Word, which is wisdom, knowledge and understanding.— Spoken to a son, and filled with love and assurance ("my words"); spoken as behests for a son's highest welfare ("my commandments").

III. *What a wonderful purpose in the giving of the gift.*

To further the life; to protect it from foes.— To keep safe the paths of right and the way of godly men through this sinful world to the home above.

Righteousness, forgiveness, pardon the first and foremost gift of the Lord to the godly man. What can the second be? It is like the circumference to the center of that first gift— wisdom! It is the sum of all life, light, power, truth, grace, mercy, comfort, and true happiness. Do you want these treasures? It is the supreme question for every godly man.

Do You Want God's Gift of Wisdom?

- I. *Will you receive it in his way?*
- II. *Will you prize it for what it is?*
- III. *Will you use it for what it does?*

Are You a True Son of Wisdom?

- I. *Have you been trained in her school?*
- II. *Are you crowned by her gift?*
- III. *Do you walk in her way?*

Wisdom's Son:**The Man With the Golden Necklace.**

- I. *How he acquired it. V. 1-4.*
- II. *The gold it is made of. V. 5-6.*
- III. *The pendant attached to it. V. 7-8.*

THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 Sam. 7, 17-29

With humble thanks and fervent praise King David accepts the promise which the Lord has just made to him through the prophet Nathan: "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." That promise was made to David as a gift, and he himself declares how unworthy he was of such a gift. This gift to David, however, is a gift to us all, for the heart of the promise made to David is Jesus Christ, who is to rule us for ever, and the heart of the promise concerning the Temple Solomon was to build is the Temple of the Church of Christ, which shall stand for ever, and of which we are to be a part. So this is the great gift for the Godly Life here presented: *the Lord's promise to David concerning Christ and the Church.* — As in the two previous texts the gifts bestowed on the godly man necessarily involve the reception of these gifts, so also here. The gift of forgiveness is received by repentance and faith. The gift of wisdom, however, is obtained by hearing, applying the heart, and diligent searching. In like manner King David, in our text, receives this immense gift of promise by gratitude and praise of the Lord by which he voices the most complete faith in the Lord's promise, and we are to receive it likewise. There is only one difference: for David it was all promise and the fulfillment for him lay wholly in the future, while for us that promise has already been largely fulfilled and our reception of the promise is and should accordingly be more joyful. The point of prayer in our text is

wholly secondary. This must be carefully noted, for there are always preachers like Ohly who incline to make such a secondary feature the primary one. The deplorable aspect is that here, for instance, they preach on *the virtues of David*, and in this case particularly on his fine way of praying with thanks and praise, and thus thrust into the background the very thing which David himself made so prominent in his prayer, namely *the Lord's superabounding grace*, his Word and promise, Christ and the Church. This is because of the faulty homiletical training (at least in good part), which leads so many preachers to fiddle everlastingly only on the string of homiletical application (as David — so we — or so not we), and scarcely ever to strike the golden chords of homiletical appropriation (the Lord's promise, grace, gift, Christ, etc. — do thou receive by faith; thank, praise — Amen!). In almost any text in which human personages appear (good ones, or bad ones) beside God or Christ, or grace, or any of the supreme divine gifts (for instance texts from the Passion History), they preach on these personages, as if our salvation depended on them, and either disregard God, Christ, grace, etc. entirely, or treat them lightly as if these were minor considerations. The hearer is sent away with "lessons" from poor old Peter, cowardly Pilate, miserable Judas, and that is about all. Jesus is left standing in the background scarcely noticed. So here we would have David filling the entire canvas, as the great figure in the whole painting (sermon), and the astounding promise of God's grace would be pushed into a corner. Make your homiletical rule to preach appropriation wherever possible, since application will be abundant without effort anyway. Fill your hearer's mind and heart with the grand impressions of God, Christ, grace, etc., and use the human side-figures as minor features. They are the frame of the picture, not the picture itself. — We need say little regarding the context

here, as this can be gathered from the chapter from which our text is taken.

17. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David. 18. Then went King David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who *am* I, O Lord GOD? and what *is* my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? 19. And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And *is* this the manner of man, O Lord GOD? 20. And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord GOD, knowest thy servant. 21. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know *them*. 22. Wherefore thou art great O LORD God: for *there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.* 23. And what one nation in the earth *is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?* 24. For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel *to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD art become their God.*

In this section we have David's humble thanks for the Lord's great promise; in the next section we have David's praiseful petition for the fulfillment of the Lord's great promise. At least ten times David addresses God by name, as if he were ringing the changes on that name, and as if its very sound were sweet to his ears. And ten times David calls himself "thy servant," as if he delighted in this his position and attitude over against so gracious and generous a Lord God.

According to all these words, recorded in v. 5-16, Nathan gave young king David information. In v. 4 we learn only that the Lord spake to Nathan; here in v. 17 we learn that he spake in a vision, **and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.** While the vision came at night it was not a dream, nor received in sleep, but while Nathan was awake. We may take it that in some manner the Lord appeared unto Nathan and thus made the communication for David. God honored the office of his prophet in communicating with him instead of with David directly. — The impression on David when he had heard Nathan was deep indeed, as his action shows: **Then went David in and sat before the LORD.** This means that David went into the sanctuary erected on Zion for the ark of the covenant. That ark marked the Lord's presence, so that coming near it David was "before the Lord." The verb *yashab* means "to settle" somewhere, and thus "to dwell." So *yesheb* may be translated "sat," but hardly in this connection; Luther has *blieb*, "remained," which is far better. Sitting for prayer is hardly the proper attitude; standing, kneeling, or lying prostrate with face to the earth is far more to be expected.

And now we have David's prayer in full. It is a perfect expression of what true prayer should be. This prayer is really David's answer to the Lord's great promise, and his humble, grateful, praiseful acceptance of that promise, and thus exceptional and highly individual in character. It uses the weighty address: **O Lord GOD**, '*Adonay Yahveh*, which is marked in our English translation by printing "Lord" without the small capitals, for '*Adonay*; and by using "GOD" with the small capitals for *Yahveh* in this connection. The Keri for *Yahveh* is regularly '*Adonay*; but when '*Adonay Yahveh* occurs the Keri is '*Elohim*. Thus God is addressed as the great Ruler of all, who directs and controls all things, and this Ruler as the

covenant Lord of his people Israel. One sees at once how appropriate this address is; and its continued repetition keeps this great meaning of the divine double title before David's heart throughout the prayer.—The prayer opens with a double rhetorical question: **Who am I? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?** The implied answer is: I and my family are nothing and are not worthy of such signal grace. Compare Jacob's humble expression of unworthiness in Gen. 32, 10: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant." This negative implication, however, includes the corresponding positive element, the ascription of all glory and credit to the Lord alone. This is indicated plainly by the *ki* clause: "that thou hast brought" etc. '*Ad-halom* is "hither," or "hitherto," namely to this glorious point in my life.—From the present moment David thus looks back over the course on which the Lord has brought him, finding it away beyond his worthiness. But when from this present moment he looks forward, the future appears far greater and more blessed. So he adds: **And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD;** the imperfect *kal* from *katon*, "to be small." By "this" he means all the past favors of the Lord. But note well, he does not call them small in themselves, or small in his own sight, or small even by comparison with other greater favors; he says: This was a small thing "in thine eyes." The Lord accounted it small. Luther catches the real sense when he translates: *Dazu hast du das zu wenig geachtet*—the Lord accounted it too small considering what all he had in mind regarding David and his house.—And now David touches upon God's greater plan as this involved himself and his family: **but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come,** concerning a wonderful and mighty future. "Hast spoken" refers to the Lord's promise,

which David implicitly believed. He calls himself "thy servant," 'abd'ka, and repeats this term again and again as one pleasant to his own ears and expressing exactly his relation to the Lord. To be an 'ebed of the Lord means to belong to him, to do his bidding and will and thereby to please him, to give up all self-will, to be merely a tool in the Lord's hands. So Paul and the other apostles loved to call themselves the δοῦλοι, 'abadim, Ger. *Knechte*, of Jesus; and Jesus himself in the second half of Isaiah is called the 'Ebed Yahveh. King though David was, he is only a servant unto the Lord. And that likewise involves his "house," namely David's descendants. Now the Lord has spoken of this his servant's house in his gracious purpose and plans "for a great while to come." *Merchag* means "distance," and is often used of distant localities, here however of distant time. Why any man should interject the remark here that David's word *l'merachog*, "for a distant time," does not prove that David understood 'ad-'olam. "for ever" in the Lord's promise, is hard to see, except that these supposedly critical minds are always bent on reducing every bit of true faith and insight in the Old Testament to the low level of their own critical inability. If "for a great while to come" here does not mean what the Lord stated in "for ever," then David did not understand the Lord's promise, and then this whole prayer is a conundrum, for it can be understood only on the basis of David's actual grasp of what the Lord meant by his promise. — The next clause is quite a *crux interpretum*. Our version translates: **And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?** The R. V. makes the sentence declarative instead of affirmative, which in no wise solves the difficulty. Now *thorah ha'adam* does not mean "the manner" of man, for *thorah* is found nowhere in that sense. Luther's rendering: "This is the manner of a man who is God the Lord," makes 'Adonay Yahveh (*Yehovih*) an apposition,

whereas it occurs ten times as the vocative of address in this prayer. Instead of cataloging the various efforts of the exegetes, we here content ourselves by giving the only one that is sound. We fortunately have a second version of this entire prayer in 1 Chron. 17, 16 etc., where this disputed sentence reads: "and hast regarded me (in the sense of: hast visited, hast dealt with me) according to the estate (or manner) of a man of high degree (i. e. of prominence)." Here we have the chief thought for interpreting the briefer sentence in our text: "And is this the law of man?" No; this is not human law, but the law of divine unmerited grace. As such it fills David with the greatest wonder and praise. That the Lord God should by his promise set up such a law, giving him and his house a kingdom, and out of his house a king, for ever, is almost too much for even David to grasp. Here David perceived that this kingdom for ever would have to have more than a mere human king; that King to come would be more than merely David's son, he would also be David's Lord, Ps. 110, 1.

After such marvelous treatment on God's part David, at once humbled and exalted, exclaims: **And what can David say more unto thee?** namely by way of gratefully characterizing and acknowledging the great thing God has done. The use of his own name in place of the pronoun I puts this question, in thought, into God's mouth, as if God were asking what more David could say; lit.: "What can David add yet to the word to thee?" — The answer is: Nothing. Nor does David need to add anything: **for thou, Lord GOD, knowest thy servant,** his thankful heart lies perfectly open before thy omniscience. When a man is pure and sincere in his thoughts and motives he rejoices to know that God sees right into his heart. Yet there are hypocrites who also make bold with this assurance to us that God knows their hearts —

and he does indeed, and will thus judge them out of their own mouths.

After expressing his own unworthiness for the reception of such an astounding promise, for the full appreciation of which on his part he must refer God from his weak words to his fervently grateful heart, David declares why really God had done this wonderful thing: **For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things.** "Thy word" is the proximate motive of God, "thine own heart" the ulterior motive. And this "word" is God's previous promise or promises — he always keeps his word, is true to himself. Commentators debate whether this means some promise pertaining to David himself or one or more pertaining to other bearers of the covenant, such as the promise to Jacob, Gen. 49, 10; Num. 24, 17 etc. But there seems to be no reason for such an alternative. 1 Chron. 28, 4 shows how David understood his own relation to the previous covenant promises; and this includes all the promises up to that date, not merely the two mentioned above. Only as with all the previous recipients of these promises, so also with David — every new repetition of the covenant promise of God was an advance, a fuller unfolding of it, showing new parts and sides of its greatness, and thus overwhelming with joy those who received the amplified statements. Moreover David had been a pupil of Nathan, and was thus fully instructed. — Yet the deeper source of all that now was promised to David is the unfathomable **heart** of the Lord God: "according to thine own heart." In that heart dwells the love and grace of God, which are simply beyond our human comprehension, save in so far as we know from human love and grace (even though these are tarnished by sin) that these are the highest, noblest, and most glorious attributes. What staggers us about these attributes in God is their absolute perfection,

their infinite reach, their immensurable greatness as directed to us sinful men. David knew that the stupendous promise made to him was in fullest accord and harmony with that loving and gracious heart of God. It was thus that God had done **all these great things**, *kol-g^edullah*, "all this greatness," here "all this great thing." And to this is added: **to make thy servant know**, *hodi'a*, hiphil from *yada'*, "to make (one) realize," here to realize the greatness of the deed. For God could carry out his great plan without saying anything to David about it; that God tells him all about it is for David's realization of what God is using him for.

David now draws the immediate deduction from it all, which shows that he does indeed realize what God intends in his case: **Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God**, *gadal*, "to be great," reasoning back from the act to the actor, from the effect to the cause. The *g^edullah* was the revelation by which God showed himself to be *gadol*, so that David and others saw it. And this greatness is supreme or absolute: **for there is none like thee**, equally great, or similarly great. There is only one such greatness in all the universe. It is incomparable. And this means: **neither is there any God beside thee**, or outside of thee. God alone is God; there is none other. With David this is no abstract proposition, no mere doctrine that has been taught him (although we at first receive it thus), and no reasoning, no logical conclusion at which he has arrived. It is the sum and substance of his experience with God and his love and mercy. Yet even so, it is a great satisfaction to David to be able to add that his own personal experience is not an odd or singular or exceptional thing. For if he stood alone among men in this experience it would upset his faith, nor could God's love and grace then be what David now knew them to be. So he adds: **according to all that we have heard with our ears**, namely

from the inspired records of former times (especially from Moses and the Pentateuch), and from the lips of divinely commissioned and inspired prophets. This teaching was all true, true, of course, also without any experience of David; but being true, all those who come in living contact with it will find it true, and the closer and longer the contact the more will they realize its truth.

In v. 23 David adds a portion of the notable things "we have heard with our ears" from the inspired writings, but in dramatic fashion, addressing now God himself, now almost in the same breath his own people. **And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom etc.** Combine *mi* with *goy* 'achad = which nation any one = "what one nation." The answer implied is, of course, there is not a single other nation like Israel, here named after Jacob's name of honor. — In what respect there is no other one like this the relative clause shows: **whom God went to redeem for a people to himself.** We must read 'asher as the object of *liphdoth lo*, "whom to redeem for himself," *phadah*, here in the more general sense of "release or set free for himself," namely from the bondage of Egypt through the hand of Moses. Throughout the Old Testament this deliverance from Egypt together with the instatement in Canaan is treated as the superlative evidence of the Lord's power and love, and thus of his being true God alone. Note that *halku*, "went," is plural, but not merely as according with the plural form of 'Elohim, so that the sentence would refer only to the true God. Here 'Elohim includes the idea of the other gods as well. For, as Keil puts it, the sense is not this: Is there any other people on earth to whom the true God has gone to deliver them etc.; but: Is there a people to whom the god that they worshipped has gone, as the true God did go to redeem it as his people. And this act of the true God is here used as evidence to show

that he alone is God, and that all others whom the nations worship are gods only in name. — That already explains the sense of the addition: **and to make him a name**, which means: to reveal himself as the true God. For *shem* in the Old, and *ὄνομα* in the New Testament, always refer to God's (or Christ's) revelation, by which alone men may know him. It is inevitable that when God thus reveals himself he appears full of glory, which glory is either the shining forth of the sum of his attributes or of some of those attributes, namely those involved in some individual manifestation or act. For God simply is glorious, and can reveal himself in no other way. So also every revelation of his Name, while it reflects God's glory, magnifies and sheds honor upon him, invariably also pours blessings upon men, save upon the wicked when God reveals himself in judgment to them. — So here David adds: **and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods.** Here David, in dramatic fervor addresses his own people: "to do for *you*," namely Israel; and this *lakem*, "for you," balances finely the two preceding *lo*, "for himself" and "him" (= for himself). Yes, by all means let Israel know that which God did "for himself" he really did for Israel: "for you." — Two terms are used for what God thus did, the singular *g^edullah*, as in v. 21, which is comprehensive and puts it all into one great act done for Israel: "the great deed"; and then the plural *nora'oth*, the niphal participle from *yare'*, "things terrible" or astounding, as done upon or against the enemies of Israel in both Egypt and Canaan. Israel beheld it all as one great comprehensive deed done by God in its favor; the enemies beheld many terrible deeds in succession done against them. — "For *thy* land, before *thy* people, which *thou* redeemedst," must refer again to God, after the brief address to

Israel in "for you." Note too, "for you" is plural, while "for thy land" etc. is singular. The commentators might as well close the debate on this point, since they also have only the alternative of a change in the reading, namely substituting for "for thy land" the reading in Chronicles "for to expel," a substitution which simply cannot be made. The comprehensive great thing and the many terrible things God did in behalf of his (chosen) land, namely Canaan, Israel's future home; and he did them furthermore, "before thy people," for them to see them all and be duly impressed with them as showing God in his greatness. — It is now directly stated that all this was in connection with the redemption (deliverance) from Egypt. — The two final words, namely *goyim ve'lohav* are simply appositional to *mimmitrayim*, and thus governed by the *min* in the latter: "from Egypt, (from) the nations and their gods," as also our version translates. It was thus that God in an incomparable manner is great indeed, and is the only God.

V. 23 showed historically the way in which God had proceeded in executing the first portion of his covenant promise. V. 24 follows thus up by the full outcome of it all in David's day: **For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever.** *Th^ekonen* is the imperfect polel from *kun*, and means "thou hast founded," and thus confirmed. By the acts described God founded Israel as the people chosen by him for himself. Not, however, to be merely a nation among other nations, to rise and prosper and then decline as they, but as "a people unto thee for ever," 'ad-'olam. That was the one side; the other was: **and thou, LORD, art become their God,** thou as the covenant Lord, Yahveh, and thou art become "their God," lit.: "for them for a God," exerting also all thy power in their behalf. This is the constant formula that runs all through Scripture even to the end of Revelations: "And he will

dwell with them, and they shall be *his people*, and God himself shall be with them, and be *their God.*" Rev. 21, 3. Do not say that David had no vision of God's plan in the vast future; he here proves that he had. Let those who will, pervert the Scriptures on the knowledge of the Old Testament saints regarding the plan of salvation. That "his people" and "their God" meant, not a people after the flesh, but a spiritual people of true worshippers, on that nothing needs to be said here; the Scriptures are full of this. But note carefully how David puts the promise God made to him and his house in perfect alignment with all that God had done in the matter of the covenant up to this time; and also how David sees the connection of the promise he had received with the entire future so plainly indicated already in the past acts of the covenant Lord.

Now follows his praiseful petition that God may indeed carry out his promise as pertaining to David's house:

25. And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish *it* for ever, and do as thou hast said. **26.** And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts *is* the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. **27.** For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: Therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. **28.** And now, O Lord GOD, thou *art* that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant. **29.** Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord GOD, hast spoken *it*, and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

In this portion of the prayer the divine names occur still more frequently, and beside them the designation of David as "thy servant." This portion deals wholly with the future. — **And now** leads up to the end of the prayer with its petition. David stresses **the word that thou hast spoken**, for that "word" is the promise; by that "word" the Lord has bound himself; and thus that "word" is the foundation of all of David's spiritual hopes. It is, of course, the literal "word"; and for David not one syllable of it was in doubt. David prays that the Lord may **establish it for ever**, *haqem (qum)* the imperfect hiphil, i. e. make it ever stand firm. But in this sense: **and do as thou hast said**. Of course, there is here no intimation that God might after all not keep his word, might say one thing, and yet in the end do another. Daechsel's comment: "that Israel may more and more know and realize thee as God," is beside the mark. For David the promise is absolutely sure, which means that he knows God *will* do as he has said. If nevertheless he petitions: "do as thou hast said," David thinks of the unworthiness, the sins, the possible provocations of the people, which might induce God to withdraw his promise, or to fulfill it, not in David's, but in some other house. David here thought of his own sins and his own unworthiness.

So also he stresses nothing in himself or in his people as reasons for insuring the fulfillment, but only God's own great Name: **And let thy name be magnified for ever**, or "be great." Mark the constant recurrence of '*ad-olam*, "for ever." It has such stress that if one were to shave it down to mean only "for a long time," the entire chapter would become a farce, God promising only long temporal government, and David overwhelmed by mere temporal goodness.— David even clothes this magnification in words of his own, that men shall say to the end of time: **The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel**, he who is the change-

less covenant Lord of all the heavenly hosts (angels and stars), he is the Elohim whose power maintains and governs Israel, that Israel which shall continue among all other men on earth as his peculiar people till time has run its course. When Israel itself thus proclaims, on the basis of the promise, the great and wondrous Name, it will be in praise and adoration; and when others are impressed by this proclamation they will be drawn to Israel and united with it. — What David said in v. 25 concerning the Lord's word, that he now restates according to the contents of that word: **and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee**, *nakon* the participle with *yihyeh*. The sense is: Let nothing ever prevent the fulfillment of this promise concerning my house.

It is no personal selfish motive that moves David, no desire for mere aggrandizement; so he says: **For thou hast revealed to thy servant** (lit.: "hast opened the ear of thy servant), **saying: I will build thee an house**. He uses only this short form of the divine word, for that is enough by which to indicate that he is moved by the divine grace back of this word, and not by selfish, ambitious ideas. Here, however, David uses the fullest title of God in his entire prayer: **O LORD of hosts, God of Israel**, summing up in this title what the previous verse expressed as the Summary of the divine Name and revelation among men. — Thus he justifies his petition: **therefore**, *'al-ken*, for this reason alone, **thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee**. When grace and the consciousness of grace moves the heart one may venture to pray; he will then pray aright, and his prayer will be acceptable to God.

In v. 28-29 David repeats his prayer once more; there is first the amplified address (28), and then the request (29). The start is the same as in v. 25: **And now etc.**, *v'aththah*, meaning: to come now to what is on my heart. He uses the same name:

O Lord GOD, but makes additions. First: **thou art that God**, namely the one I have described in v. 18-24, especially in v. 22. *Hu'* is used thus to point back, and here its import is: the only one. This Lord God is God alone. — Thus first his being and person, then next his word: **and thy words be true**, are *'ameth*, “verity”; all of them, for the simple reason that God is God. A denial of his truth is a denial of his godhead. — And now the third fact, laid on top of the other two: **and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant**, here summing up the entire promise in the one term *tobah*, “goodness,” the feminine verbal adjective: that which is good, lovely, pleasant, delightful. The three statements in v. 28 are like confessions of faith, and are uttered with unquestioning faith as divine, incontrovertible facts.

As such they form the basis for the prayer already made, now summarily repeated: **therefore now etc.**, just as in v. 26, **let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee**. *Ho'el* is the imperfect hiphil from *ya'al*, “to resolve,” and thus to begin something; *barek* is the imperfect piel from *berek*, “to praise,” and thus “to bless”: “be thou pleased and bless.” The blessing asked is the one already promised, that David’s house may continue *l'olam*, “for ever,” and in the same sense as before: that nothing may occur to prevent the blessed divine assurance from being carried out fully. As the future history shows God had a hard time with Israel and David’s own descendants in carrying out his promise. But there was Mary and Joseph at last, of the house and lineage of David, whom God used in setting up his King over the true house of Israel and David for ever. — **For thou hast spoken it**, is the seal David puts under his petition like a great and glorious Amen. “Thou” is emphatic, made more so by **O Lord GOD**. — **And with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever**,

may be read: "will the house etc. be blessed," *y^eborak*, the pual. The Hebrew combines: "be blessed with thy blessing"; and it uses *min*, "from out of thy blessing, picturing the blessing as the source from which this particular blessing to David shall flow. And the last word is the significant *l^eolam*, "for ever."

SUGGESTIONS

To be sure we can learn something from every prayer of either the Old or the New Testament saints. But he who sees nothing but cheap "lessons on prayer" in a great Messianic text like ours for this Sunday, certainly ought to go to school a little longer. A better effort to get to the heart of this text is the theme of Geo. Hein: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," only the text does not deal with "God's perpetual dominion," (1) dimly seen by David (who saw it very clearly, *not* dimly!); (2) clearly declared by Christ; (3) strongly exemplified in the Christian Church. The text deals with the Messianic kingdom, through the house and lineage of David, and its perpetuity "for ever." Now in that kingdom of David's Son and David's Lord we all have a share. That is how the text pertains to us to this day. So drop even this homiletical scheme (application): As God made a promise to David — so he makes promises to us; and as David received his promise — so we must receive our promises. No, this is a text for homiletical appropriation: the promise made to David is a promise full of grace and salvation to us all — believe and receive it. But distinguish: only David and his house could be and were progenitors of Christ — in the whole world they only. Believe that, rejoice in it, praise God for it. Yet David and every person of his house and lineage could and did receive the saving grace in the blessing of David only as we receive it now, namely, by faith alone, faith in that King and kingdom for ever. So let us outline:

The Lord God's Greatest Promise to King David and Our Share in It.

- I. *The Savior promised to David is our Savior.*
- II. *The kingdom promised to David's house is our kingdom to-day.*

- III. *The greatness and grace of the Lord God in this promise to David and his house are over us now.*
- IV. *Shall not the faith with which David received this promise be our faith at this moment?*

This is analysis, not of the parts of the text, i. e., its verses, but of the substance of the text, its central thoughts.

The wonders of the Godly Life are the gifts of God with which it shines. Here is the greatest of these gifts — the kingdom that shall continue for ever. What a *Giver* to bestow such a gift! What infinite *blessing* contained in that gift! What a glorious *word and promise* bringing this gift! What *faith and gratitude* should rise to receive this gift! (Let us remark here that it is often very effective for arousing the interest in what the sermon is to bring, thus to lay a finger on its main points right in the introduction. Then there is little need of announcing the parts right after starting the theme. State each formulated part at the climax of the elaboration of that part, somewhere near the middle of each part, or towards the end, or at the end.)

**When the Lord God Established the House of David
For Ever,**

He Made His Greatest Gift to Him and to Us.

- I. Tell the story of the promise and gift to David, in brief and pithy words, using v. 23-24 and then the revelation to Nathan and v. 19, etc. This promise reaching back so far, and extending on for ever, culminating in David's son and Lord, how wondrously it revealed **the divine Giver**, v. 22, his "goodness," v. 28, etc. This is our Giver, for the gift to David was given also to us.
- II. Tell the promise in detail, especially what it involved concerning an eternal kingdom, with an eternal King (Jesus Christ, God's Son, Mary's son), under whom we now are to live in righteousness, innocence, and blessedness for ever (Luther's explanation of the Second Article). What infinite **divine blessings** for David and us all! That kingdom is here now, etc.
- III. Tell how the gift was made to David, namely, by **the divine word and promise**, which are sure and everlasting, reaching back from the actual birth of

Christ to David, and forwarded from that birth to us now. V. 21 in that word is the heart of God; God does his word, v. 25; his word is true, v. 28.

- IV. And now tell how this wonderful gift can alone be received, how it was put into word and promise in order to enable this receiving. Only let no doubt of reason or any foolish thoughts of ours interfere. It is all simple and easy. It simply requires **faith**, and the promise itself awakens it; and that faith will be coupled with deepest, humblest **gratitude**, when we think of our utter unworthiness, even as David did. — In the conclusion strike the main points again, like full, clear chords.

When some of the German preachers misuse this text for preaching on earthly kings and their relation to their people (Fritsche), or on the Christian and his *Vaterland* (G. Mayer), and when their abuses of this text are even printed (Langsdorff, A. Pfeiffer), one hardly knows what to say. It is homiletical application carried to the point of monstrosity. Let the Messianic character of this text preserve our homiletical souls!

THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Prov. 24, 14-20

Among the greatest gifts of the Godly Life we must count *the assured future* guaranteed to it by the Lord God, in contrast with every ungodly life which has no future blessed reward, but goes out like a sputtering candle. How valuable this certainty regarding the future is, even beyond the treasure which it itself constitutes, we are here shown in several points: 1) no lasting harm can damage the godly man; 2) no sinful joy will fill his heart at sight of the misfortune of the wicked; 3) nor will he be envious of the wicked. These negatives, of course, involve the corresponding positives. — The text constitutes a little unit by itself, and is taken from what has been termed the first appendix (22, 17-24, 22) to the first large collection of Solomon's proverbs (10, 1-22, 16). There is a second supposed appendix (24, 23-34), and then another large collection attributed to Solomon (21, 1 to the end of chapter 29) followed by further appendices. — Our pericope might begin with v. 13:

“My son, eat thou honey, because it is good;
and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste.”

For the address “my son” marks a section or paragraph, and v. 14 is attached to v. 13, showing what is meant by the figure of the honey and honeycomb. But evidently those who selected the text did not want this figure to be drawn in, and really it is only a figure, and not material to the subject of the text, namely the godly man's certainty of a blessed future.

14. **So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul when thou hast found it there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.**

The chief thought of the text is expressed in this *mashal*, and the corresponding negative formulation of it is at the end in v. 20. The comprehensive term *chokmah*, **wisdom**, has already been fully explained. It is the spiritual wisdom that is to be a power in our hearts and lives, namely the ability to use divine truth for the purpose for which it was revealed to us, compare the comment on "wisdom" in Prov. 2, 2, The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity. While in that text wisdom itself was considered as a divine gift of God to the godly man, here the stress is on one of the great effects of wisdom, one which is in itself a gift of God to the godly man. **The knowledge of wisdom**, would signify its possession. Our translators read *de'ah*, the noun for "knowledge," and thus supplied the verb: "shall be," which is quite simple; others read *d'eh*, here changed from *d'ah* because the next word begins with the letter *cheth*, the imperative *kal* from *yada'*: "thus consider (or understand) wisdom for thy soul," namely that it is like honey and the honeycomb for thy body, that is, exceedingly good and wholesome. The reading with the verb is the correct one. That means that "wisdom" is already considered as the godly man's possession, and he is now told how he ought to consider this possession. **Unto thy soul** should then be rendered: "for thy soul," or in regard to it. *Nephesh*, "soul," emphasizes man's immaterial part, but here hardly in contrast to the body, for v. 13 really does not mention the body. "Soul" is used to signify the entire man or person, but designating that person from its higher (immaterial) side. Yet *nephesh* here is not in

contrast with *ruach*, the spirit, which would give the entire sentence a wrong slant. Wisdom here is simply taken as having its seat in the soul, the center of our person, where knowledge, emotions, and will originate. With wisdom thus in the soul, all its abilities or faculties will be purified (knowing, feeling, willing), and all their activities will be purified likewise. And that means that the soul's use of the body and the bodily members will likewise be sanctified and ennobled spiritually. In other words, wisdom in the soul means faith, love, and obedience as the fruit of wisdom's possession in the soul. The man who has wisdom will think, talk, and act as a believer, or as a godly man. — **When thou hast found it**, shows that the possession of wisdom is meant. Wisdom is always "found," *matsa'*, only not like human learning by man's own mental efforts. Wisdom itself is a gift. God has embodied wisdom, as divine truth, in his Word. His Word is wisdom. And since Christ is the center of that Word, wisdom is embodied in Christ; to have him in the soul, truly to know him by faith, is wisdom. Now God brings his Word to us, puts it as it were in our path so that we cannot help but see and thus come in contact with it. And this wisdom or truth in the Word is highly attractive; it draws and enables us to appropriate it. When this occurs we have begun to "find" wisdom. Yet it is not acquired all at once; remember the psychological scale in Prov. 2, 1 etc. The first finding must be followed by further activity on our part, even to the point of earnest and persistent seeking and searching. But in the end all the godly man's efforts at searching will be rewarded only in such a way that his securing of the prize is like finding a hidden treasure.

The main clause reads: **then there shall be a reward**. Because *'acharith* has several meanings commentators fluctuate as to the sense here. Some would draw this clause to the subordinate one pre-

ceding: "when thou hast found it (wisdom), and the end comes," namely death, "then thy expectation shall not be cut off." Now *'acharith* may mean "end" in one or the other sense, but *yesh* does not mean "comes," "arrives," but simply: "there is." So the main clause begins with *v'yesh*: "then there is an end." And in what sense *'acharith*, "end," is meant here, the following clause shows: "and thy expectation shall not be cut off." This is put beyond question by v. 20, where *'acharith* is denied of the evil man: "there shall be no end to the evil man." *'Acharith* thus is not the end with which something ceases, but the latter part, the final portion, at which something arrives. End thus signifies a blessed "future," even as Delitzsch also translates *'acharith*, and adds by way of comment: *heilwaertiges Ende, lohnender, seliger Ausgang*. Our English version has "reward" in the verses of our text, while in 23, 18, in exactly the same reading, it translates *'acharith* with "end." Now it is most certainly true: the gift of a blessed future for the godly man always goes with the gift of wisdom. No wonder Balaam the son of Beor said: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end, *'acharithi*, be like his," Num. 23, 10. — The positive: "there shall be a reward (future)," is explained by the negative: **and thy expectation shall not be cut off**, *thikkareth*, niph'al from *karath*, "to be cut off" or abolished; used with *thiqvah* Koenig translates it: "hope is destroyed," although we to-day in our English still speak of hope being cut off. "Hope springs eternal in the breast," and this includes the hope of a blessed outcome of life, the hope of a blissful hereafter. Only perverts like atheists and their kin spurn such hope; all others cling to it in some form or other. But our text speaks of hope in the objective sense, not merely in the subjective. The wicked indeed go on in hoping, unbelievers of all kinds, as well as perverted believers, who refuse to accept the divine wis-

dom of truth, have their own self-made hopes in their hearts. The point is that they are without objective hope, namely the divine reality which at last shall appear in joy and blessedness for them. Hope is like a check. You can forge one or fake one yourself, and carry it around all your life, sure that when you finally present it at God's bank he will honor it; but though you feel happy with that worthless check all your life, in the supreme hour when you hand that check in, it will not be cashed. The godly man's check is issued by God himself; there is no question about its payment by God's bank at the end of your life. Even if your hope and expectation was not overly strong while you held that check in this life, though you wavered and doubted at times, just so you held fast to the check (wisdom, truth) to the last, payment on it will not be refused.

15. Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous: spoil not his resting place:

16. For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

The godly man's future is assured because of his possession of wisdom. What that means in regard to the misfortunes that may fall upon him in this life through wicked men in the way of persecution and cruel wrongs and treatment in general, is now stated. But not abstractly. It is put concretely and even in dramatic form, in words addressed to the wicked man himself. He will probably pay no attention to this warning and will go on to vent his hate upon the godly man whose faith in God's wisdom irritates him, especially when the godly man, as he is bound to do, confesses this faith of his and seeks to make others embrace wisdom also. — **Lay not in wait against the**

dwelling of the righteous, *'arab*, to lie and watch with evil intent, here either to rob the dwelling, *naveh*, which he has made his home, or to drive him out of it. Here the godly man whose life is directed by divine wisdom is called *tsaddiq*, "the righteous," i. e. one who has God's verdict in his favor. His is the perfect righteousness of faith, Ps. 32, 1 etc., and as a fruit of it also the righteousness of a godly life, which though still imperfect is covered by God's righteousness and grows by grace more perfect as time goes on. This warning is meant in the sense that the scheming of the wicked man is really useless. He would like to play the part of Satan in the case of Job, namely show up the godly man as being godly only for the gain God gives him, so that when this is taken from him he, too, will curse God like the wicked. Or this wicked man wants to snatch the prosperity of the godly man from him from spite, merely to show him how little protection his religion offers him. The address: **O wicked man**, is added at once to characterize this base schemer and to call him by his right name. — The first line pictures the evil intent, the second mentions the violent act: **spoil not his resting place**, the piel of *shadad*, "to devastate," Ger. *verwuesten*, by falling upon it robbing and ruining it. And *rebetz*, "resting place," is his home, where he has settled down, derived from *rabatz*, "to stretch out on all fours," cf. Ps. 23, 2: "Thou makest me to lie down in green pastures," to rest on all fours. — The actions of the wicked man here described are in the nature of an example of the persecutions to which the godly man is liable in this world. This sample belongs under the heading: the hatred of the world. Look at Luke 6, 28: "them which despitefully use you"; Mark 4, 17: "when affliction or persecution ariseth for the world's hate"; Rom. 8, 35: "tribulations, or distress, or persecution" etc.; Heb. 10, 34: "took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in

yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance," and many other passages. In our present situation the godly are still subject to this spite work of the world and its evil men, who like to deprive a godly man of his job, for instance, or prevent him from getting a position, squeeze and injure him in money matters, business deals, and the like.

V. 16 covers the instances mentioned in v. 15 and all others which in any way look like injuries to the godly man in the course of his life. They are all only incidental, minor affairs, and do not cut off or destroy the supreme hope he has for the hereafter, '*acharith*, the latter part. **For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again**, by the grace and help of God. When A. Pfeiffer thinks this statement is made for the benefit of the wicked man who seeks to damage the godly, he is quite mistaken. The object here is not to tell the wicked that his base efforts will prove futile, and that he might as well quit on that account, so that one might wonder why the wicked man was not warned rather of the wickedness and damnableness of his undertaking instead of its uselessness. To be sure, his persecutions are useless — let him, too, know it; but what is here said is really for the godly and for us all, in the way of assurance and comfort while we wait in hope for the end of our faith, 1 Pet. 1, 9. *Yiphphol*, the *kal* from *naphal*, here means "falleth" in the sense of "suffereth misfortune"; only the expression is picturesque and strong, of falling so that one lies prostrate and flat. "Seven times," *sheba'*, (supply construct from *shib'a phe'amim*), is merely a current round number for quite a few times. The implication is that the righteous man shall indeed come to grief in this life. So many troubles may pile upon him as to crush him completely in death. The wicked may succeed against him completely perhaps; or afflictions otherwise may prostrate him utterly. — But take a bad case like falling again and again, he

goes down indeed, **and riseth up again**, *vaqam*, perfect from *qum*; and this rising is of the divine grace and help that support him all through his earthly life, and bring him to the blessed hope that is to be fulfilled for him in the end. — The story is different with the wicked: **but the wicked shall fall into mischief**, without any rising. Here the plural is used, *r^esha'im*, for this is the fate of all of them. The niphal of *kashal* means "to totter or stumble." But *b^era'ah* here cannot mean "into mischief." Especially the feminine forms *ra'ah* and the others denote *Schlimmes*, misfortune, or anything injurious; with *b^e* the sense is: "in misfortune"; even Delitzsch translates giving the true sense: "when misfortune strikes them." The idea is not that the wicked never recover from a blow of misfortune in this life, while the righteous do so recover; but that if as many as seven misfortunes cause the righteous man to lie prostrate and actually to die, his hope is not lost by any means, his great and glorious future stands assured, so that he rises from all his troubles to everlasting joy; while when the wicked are hit a mortal blow by misfortune of some kind, they just stumble and go down, there is no glorious hope and hereafter for them at all, no divine help at the end, no rising, no blessed future. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death." Prov. 14, 32. "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble," namely when they go down at the last, Prov. 4, 19. Daechsel: "but the wicked sink away, when once they begin to stumble in misfortune, never to rise again." Elster writes: "Enmity against the righteous misses its object, because by a higher power after every blow he raises himself up again, but such base enmity against the godly plunges him who harbors it into destruction according to the just divine retribution; the wicked then, when misfortune

strikes him, has not wherewith to lift himself up again."

17. **Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth,
and let not thine heart be glad when he
stumbleth:**
18. **Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him,
and he turn away his wrath from him.**
19. **Fret not thyself because of evil men,
neither be thou envious at the wicked.**
20. **For there shall be no reward for the evil
man;
the candle of the wicked shall be put out.**

The wicked man was addressed in order that the righteous might hear and know what the Lord has to say to him. Now the righteous is again to hear about himself. When he sees an evil man, perhaps one who has done him much harm, let him not make a mistake: **Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth**, though he have abundantly deserved to fall and go down for good. The Chetib has the plural: "thine enemies," for which all translators and commentators put the singular from the Keri: "thine enemy," because of the singular suffixes in the following lines: "he stumbleth," and "from him." The verb is the same as in v. 16 for the falling of the righteous, *naphal*; and in the synonymous line: **and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth**, the verb *kashal* is repeated from v. 16, here in 17 the inf. niph'al, syncopating *heh*, *bikkashlu* instead of *b'hikkashlu*. The wicked is bound to fall and stumble when approaching his evil end. The natural sinful reaction in the godly, since they still have the flesh in them is *Schadenfreude*, gladness at his getting his dues at last. 'Al-thismach, 'al-yagel (*samach* and *gil*, imperatives) : rejoice not, be not glad. It is a sad thing at best. But there is more. — **Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him**, literally: "it be

evil in his eyes," and thus displeasing, *ra'*, perfect *kal* from *ra'a'*, here impersonal with *b'ene*: "it be evil" etc. This unholy joy on the part of a godly man cannot possibly please the Lord. In fact, considering that the wicked man is just wicked and thus has followed his natural course, while the godly man has come to know the grace and mercy of the Lord, yet in his unholy joy is acting contrary to this better and higher knowledge, this wicked joy is more deserving of the Lord's punishment than the wicked acts of the naturally ungodly man. — So the Lord is liable to show his displeasure: **and he turn away his wrath from him.** But Horton and others are mistaken when the matter is viewed in this light: "The idea seems to be, if you see your enemy undergoing punishment, if calamity is falling upon him from the Lord, then do not indulge in any insolent exultation, lest the Lord should be offended with you, and, in order to chastise your malignity, should cease to plague and trouble him. In such a view of the question, God is still regarded as a Nemesis that will resent any unseemly rejoicing in the calamity of another; in proportion therefore as you wish to see your enemy punished, you must abstain from that joy in his punishment which would lead to its diminution." *Expositor's Bible*, p. 315 etc. Especially the last statement is altogether wrong. Delitzsch is right: "The idea is not, that we refrain from joy in another's calamity in order not to interfere with the process of destruction and to allow it to attain its end, but rather, that we may not come to see that God actually shows us his displeasure by showing mercy to him on whom to see the execution of God's wrath is our pleasure." But even this is not the full solution. For, in the first place, the Lord is bound to punish the wicked, and never turns his wrath away from any wicked man just because a godly man laughs at his calamity. This turning away of wrath is only temporary; the wicked has no blessed

future, and cannot possibly get one by the wrong pleasure of a godly man. If then the Lord gives a respite to a wicked man, that means only that he will bear the man's wickedness a while longer and let it ripen out still more fully for final judgment. But we must also understand aright the attitude of the godly man. It is almost the opposite of Horton's supposition, namely refraining from joy so that the work of destruction on the wicked may be more rapidly completed. To use a paradox: for the godly thus to refrain from unholy joy would be the unholy joy of all. No; the godly man is ever and always to deplore the state and fate of the wicked man, and most of all when that fate is about to befall him. Any other feeling is wrong, and the Lord will have to let him know it. In other words, there is no more pitiable creature than the man who spurns wisdom and divine truth, lives in unbelief without it, scorns and even hurts him who brings him that wisdom. His whole future is black, blank, and bare of all light, joy, life, salvation. What a dreadful thing! Laugh at him? — no; rather will we weep over him. What if he did hurt you and me — it only shows the deadly road he is on. We forgive him, have forgiven him in the start. No unholy joy for us. — But let us not allow commentators to run in a false note here. David and also St. Paul call down maledictions upon the wicked. When they do so they are manifesting neither an unforgiving (unchristian) spirit, nor an unholy joy, but a fiery zeal for the Lord's honor, a holy indignation at the insults heaped on the Lord. Remember the Lord's woes on the Pharisees, and his scourge in the Temple, and how well they go together with his tears over doomed Jerusalem. The trouble with our Christianity is this pulpy lack of holy zeal and holy indignation, which has come to allow the Lord to be insulted even in his own house (the church), and calls unchristian any indignant effort to vindicate the Lord's

honor, expecting us to treat these insulting men with respect, charity, polite words, and what not.

V. 19 helps much to clear up matters: **Fret not thyself because of evil men**, *thithchar*, "heat not thyself," imperfect hithpael from *charah*, "to glow." Wisdom and divine truth will give us such an insight into what it means to be evil, *ra'a'*, here the participle hiphil *mera'*, plural *m're'im*, men who carry out evil, *Uebeltaeter*, *Boesewichter*, that we will neither rejoice in the evil man's fall, nor fret ourselves because perhaps he is not getting his deserts. "Heat not thyself" here does not mean that we are just to remain cool and unconcerned about men doing evil, as if we either did not see them at all, or cared nothing about their doings. We are free to be indignant, to complain to the Lord, to speak to others of their wickedness. But we are not to fret ourselves about them as if by their wickedness they were getting any advantage over us; as if we by our suffering the whiles they are having a good time and faring prosperously were being treated unjustly. — That is why the second clause adds synonymously: **neither be thou envious at the wicked**, *qana'* used only in the piel and hiphil, here the piel: "to be jealous" or "to envy." There is most assuredly not the slightest reason in the world to envy any wicked man. Wisdom should teach us that almost at once. Even if his prosperity is ever so great, it is as nothing, because that is absolutely all that he has now or ever. Who would want to trade with him? The moment this is seen, envy of him will die; with envy dying we will not get worked up about evil men getting too much; and then (going back one step farther) we will not grin and laugh when the wicked man comes to grief at last. We will just pity him from beginning to end. — **For there shall be no reward to the evil man**, no *'acharith* or future of blessedness. That is the sad and terrible thing about him. But it takes wisdom to see and really understand

this; remember the experience of Asaph, set down in Ps. 73, the classic on this subject: "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I *their end*. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction." Etc., v. 16 etc. Well may the wicked envy the godly, never the godly the wicked.— What it means to have no future is expressed figuratively, but in no uncertain way: **the candle of the wicked shall be put out.** In 13, 9 we have the *mashal*: "The light (*'or*) of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp (*ner*) of the wicked shall be put out." This brings the contrast out even in the figure itself. The translation "candle" for *ner* is approximate, for the word means an oriental lamp with a wick run through a nozzle, fed by oil in the body of the bronze vessel. *Da'ak* means "to go out," not "to put out." The wicked have no blessed future; so when "the glamor of their good fortune" (*Daechsel*) here on earth goes out, nothing is left. Losing their earthly prosperity and joy they lose everything. No wonder they try so frantically to retain it. The going out of their lamp does not necessarily mean temporal death, although that does set a terminus to their happiness. The lamp may go out long before their death, leaving even the rest of their earthly lives bare, dark, a waste. The light of the righteous burns on joyfully, for it is spiritual in its nature. Even misfortune does not quench that light, and death only makes it shine with heavenly radiance in the other world. Why then should we ever envy the wicked or rejoice at the going out of his lamp? — Here note well that "the wicked," *r'sha'im*, embrace all who lack the wisdom of divine truth, hence all unbelievers of every type, and not only those who live in open vice. The wicked are all those not called "the righteous," i. e. justified by grace through faith.

SUGGESTIONS

To have or not to have a future, that is the question. We might thus summarize our text. It presents both sides: the godly man with a future, and the ungodly without a future. Homiletically this is an invitation either to dwell on the contrast thus presented, or to dwell on the godly man alone with his great gift of a future, using the ungodly as a foil, just as positives are usually made clearer by setting the corresponding negative beside them. A third scheme is possible, of course, though nobody would prefer it here, namely, to pivot the sermon on the ungodly and his tragic lack, using the godly as a foil.

Among the greatest divine gifts of the Godly Life is that of an assured future full of joy and blessedness. Life is short at best, flying to its close. What of the hereafter? Many care little, even not at all. They just drift toward the end. They dream that it will take care of itself. Will it? God and his entire Word testify to the contrary. A blessed future to all eternity is a tremendous gift of God, made only to certain people, and distinctly not made to others. The great Giver himself has assured us of that fact over and over again, as in our text.

God's Great Gift to the Godly Man:

The Life with a Golden Future Before It.

- I. *It is bright with hope* (v. 14c).
- II. *It is strong with patience* (v. 15-16a).
- III. *It is kind with pity* (v. 16c-18 and 20).
- IV. *It is humble with content* (v. 19).
- V. *It is crowned with glory when it ends* (v. 14).

The Candle That Shall Not Go Out.

I. *God lights it; II. God shelters it; III. God lifts it on high.*

For part one use wisdom or the Word apprehended by faith. For part two use the rest of the text, v. 15, etc., showing how the godly man rises again, and is kept from being envious and rejoicing in the fall of the wicked. For part three use the promise in v. 14. This is synthesis, and it uses the striking figure of the candle.

The Story of the Two Candles.

- I. *How they are lit.* — The one by human wisdom with a false hope and expectation. The other by divine

wisdom with a sure hope and an expectation that will be realized as surely as God is God. — Which candle is burning in your heart?

II. *How they burn.* — The one with a false glare, misleading the heart to disregard God and his wisdom or Word, and to hate and ill-treat the children of God (disobedience). The other with a true light, leading to patience in tribulation, contentment with life, pity for the unbeliever. — Which of these lights is shining in your life?

III. *What God will do with them.* — The one is put out: the tragedy of it. The other burns at last in heavenly glory: the blessedness of it. — What is going to be done with your candle in the end.

This is a straight contrast between the godly and the ungodly in the matter of hope, its influence in life, and its final fulfillment; it is negative and positive side by side. Worked in this fashion the text should make a powerful appeal to the hearer.

Your Expectation:

Will it be Realized?

- I. It surely will not if you *just think* that it will.
- II. It surely will if *God has told you* that it will.
- III. It surely will make a *great difference* whether it will, or will not, *when the time comes*.
- IV. It surely ought to be of *great concern to you right now*, whether it will, or will not.

THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ps. 85, 8-13

This is the last of the texts which present to us the great gifts bestowed on the Godly Life. That is why this text is rather comprehensive in naming the gift of which it treats. It is really a final cluster of gifts that is here held up before us. We may say, they include *all the spiritual blessings of salvation*. There is first salvation itself; then mercy and truth, righteousness and grace, followed by glory and prosperity, with the Lord's presence to crown them all.

Fr. Hering sees in this text a message for a patriotic national sermon. He follows good old Tholuck who laments that there are no such watchmen on the ramparts of his nation as were the old prophets in Israel, men to feel the nation's pulse, to separate the wheat from the chaff, to enunciate the divine laws, etc. These men, it seems, try to supply this deficiency by carrying the words of the old prophets into their nation by means of their preaching. But at bottom their idea is mistaken. Their ideal is the so-called "Christian state," resting on their conception of the church as a state institution, thus in a fashion at least duplicating the theocracy of Israel. This duplication, however, is contradicted by the cold facts of the modern state, made colder as history rolls on at the present time. Perhaps that is why God sends no more grand prophets even in the form of preachers commanding the national ear. The word of Jesus, moreover, points us to a different function of the church, one concerning which we need not lament, but rather rejoice: "And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all

the world *for witness unto all nations*; and then shall the end come." Matth. 24, 14. Here the function of the Church and the churches is clearly defined. St. Paul and the apostles followed this directive. The Roman Catholic and the Reformed idea is the church dominating the state, and they put forth their respective efforts to that end with varying success, mostly varying in abortive non-success. State churches have crumbled, other state churches have lost their national hold. Christ's kingdom is spiritual and will remain so, although wherever it flourishes it results also in many earthly blessings, v. 12 of our text. While the true church ever remains a great blessing for any state, it will continue quite distinct from the state. So we decline to follow ideals like those mentioned above.

There is considerable concern among the commentators of our Psalm regarding the approximate date of its composition. Most of them incline to the period following the exile when the rebuilding of the Holy City and the rejuvenation of the nation seemed to lag, though Spurgeon holds fast to David as the author and lays his finger on v. 1: "the captivity of Jacob," which contradicts the exile idea, when only Judah returned, not the twelve tribes of Jacob. The fact is, that the Psalm furnishes us no data from which we might deduce either the author or the approximate time of its composition. Delitzsch thinks he sees in the language certain plain reflections of the prophecies of Isaiah chapters 40-66. That may be misleading, for who can prove that this similarity (which at best is slight) does not just as well show Isaiah's knowledge of our Psalm, as that it shows the Psalmist's knowledge of Isaiah? The facts of the Psalm stand out no matter when and by whom it was composed. God had favored his people in past times; he was now displeased, and the Psalmist prays for a return of his favor; that return is pictured, and the condition for

the return briefly stated, v. 8, last line. So the sum of our text is a description of the gifts of God's salvation to his believing and faithful people.

8. **I will hear what God the LORD will speak:
for he will speak peace unto his people,
and to his saints:
but let them not turn again to folly.**
9. **Surely, his salvation is nigh them that fear
him;
that glory may dwell in our land.**
10. **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.**

There is really no break in the beautiful lines. They flow on in smooth undulation. The thought centers in the array of grand concepts, each naming one of the blessings of the favor of God. The verbs and predicates are only fitting and beautiful attachments of these great concepts and help to make them more attractive. We are thus shown what abundance the Lord is ready to pour out upon us, if only we are ready to receive and appropriate it all. — V. 4-7 is an earnest plea for the Lord's mercy and salvation. No formal and direct answer from the Lord is recorded, but the Psalmist himself states what that answer will be; so he says: **I will hear what God the LORD will speak.** This does not mean that the Lord will speak by some direct revelation to the Psalmist personally.

He is only mediately a prophet, and does not venture to come to us with: "Thus saith the Lord." When he here sets himself to hear, it is to hear the word which God has already revealed by some chosen prophet of his. He dramatizes the act in true poetic fashion, telling us first that he is going to hear; then an imaginary pause as if he were listening to the Lord speaking; and then a report of what the Lord has said. The use of the two names, the second in apposition to the first, is significant, for 'El points to God's omnipotent power, to which *Yahveh* adds the note of covenant grace. — One does not see why *ki* cannot be read in the sense of **for**, as also our translation has it. The Psalmist knows what the Lord will speak, and that is the very thing that makes him so eager to hear these tidings which he knows are extremely good. — The Lord's message and answer is summarized: **he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints**, with the "and" before saints specifying them: "namely to his saints." The great concept here is **peace**, *shalom*, in the full and complete meaning of that term. It is meant as the opposite of wrath in v. 3, or anger in v. 4 and 5, or rather as the opposite of the effect which wrath and anger produce. When God speaks peace he extends, offers, gives it, and there is only the question of our accepting and retaining this gift. *Shalom* itself means *Unversehrtheit*, complete well-being and freedom from everything injurious, so that the word is really a true synonym of *y^eshu'ah*, salvation when the latter describes the state of the saved. Peace means God as our friend in every way, his love and benefactions over us, his joy and blessedness before us. Peace thus involves pardon from all sin and guilt, instatement among God's friends, a new relation and a new life. There is an objective side to peace, namely God's attitude to us; as here expressed: he speaks, or declares, peace. The corresponding subjective side of peace is our feeling of

peace with its sweet security and safety. This feeling and enjoyment should, of course, be as strong as possible. But whether it is strong or weak it is secondary to the objective side of peace. That objective side is the essential thing. If that stands, then we with our poor disturbed hearts can run to God again and again and listen to him speaking peace to us in his Word, and thus revive and intensify our feeling of peace. False peace is the feeling of security and assurance when God speaks no peace to a man, but is angry with him. This is to cry peace, peace, where there is no peace. — The Psalmist does not wish to be misunderstood when he says: **unto his people**, as though that merely lumped the nation as a nation; so he adds by way of specifying explanation: **and to his saints**. A *chasid*, "saint," is one who is gracious, and then full of piety (here toward God). Note the derivation of *chasid* from *chesed*, "favor." God can speak peace only to the godly, namely so that they will actually receive, possess, and enjoy peace. — Therefore, too, the warning: **but let them not turn again to folly**, *kislah*, from *kasal*, "to become thick, heavy, unresponsive." The idea is that they shall not turn foolishly to disregard the Lord and his Word. *Kislah* is related to *kesel*, as a piece of folly is related to the idea of folly. So the warning is concrete, not to turn to doing a thing of folly. The intimation is that such turning to folly was the cause why the Lord had turned his anger upon his people. Even the *chasidim*, "saints," are warned; for even they may be misled and thus again lose the divine favor and peace.

After summarizing the Lord's gracious answer in the one expression: "shall speak peace," the Psalmist, in the following verses dilates upon this "word of peace" and unfolds all its golden contents. For "peace" he now puts "salvation," an allied term: **Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him**. Here the Psalmist shows that he really knows what

“peace” is. His strong conviction is expressed in *'ak*, “surely.” “His salvation,” *yish'u*, is the Lord's deliverance from what his wrath and anger must bring upon his people when they yield to folly. Salvation is nigh when the Lord speaks peace, but *qarab* is in the sense of being so near as to be present. The limitation marked by “his saints” is held fast in “them that fear him,” from the adjective *yare'*, with the objective genitive in the suffix. We have described this fear of the Lord repeatedly, hence omit doing so here. That indeed is peace, God's own peace over his true children, when his saving power and grace is near them and directed toward them. Catch the silent admonition to us all to fear the Lord ever. — An infinitive with *l'* ushers in the effect of peace and salvation for those who receive these gifts of divine grace: **that glory may dwell in our land.** Just as “peace” is the comprehensive sum of the divine favor, so “glory,” *kabod*, is the comprehensive sum of the result of peace. Peace (or salvation) and glory summarize God's entire gift to the godly. Some are inclined to read *kabod* of the divine glory, namely of the Lord's own presence resting permanently in the land among his people. Others read it of glory in the sense of greatness, prosperity, honor, and power making the land and its people great. If the Lord's glorious presence were meant, that would be indicated by a suffix “his glory.” If “flourishing religious and political conditions” (Daechsel) were meant, that, too, as far as the political feature is concerned would be indicated by proper additions. It is merely because of the phrase “in our land” that so many of the Germans with their ideas of a state church bring in the notion of political glory and attempt to preach on the welfare of the fatherland. The trouble is that the text itself has intimated quite plainly a limitation: “his saints,” and “them that fear him.” Suppose that only a portion of a nation is godly, and another, perhaps larger, portion ungodly? Shall this

Psalm then still apply? If so, how about the political prosperity of the land? It is poor comfort to God's saints, when they are only a small flock, to preach to them, in substance at least, that this promise of the Lord will be fulfilled only when the bulk of the nation becomes godly. Moreover, history shows some wonderful nations that never knew God nor feared him. Their earthly and political greatness is unquestioned. No; we had better omit the political feature in this connection. The glory here meant is the one pictured in the following verses. *Shakan* with *b^e* following does not mean to cover the land, or to inhabit it altogether, but merely to dwell in the land, be present there. And the glory thus present consists of mercy and truth, righteousness and peace. The greater the number of the godly, and the more perfect their godliness, the more will this glory shine within the land. It may be politically insignificant at that, or far inferior in wealth, power, etc. to its ungodly neighbors; that is another matter entirely, one that belongs to the mysterious chapter of divine Providence, not as our text does to the revealed chapter of divine Grace.

The vital question that meets us in the four attributes named in v. 10, is whether they are human or divine, man's or God's. Interpreters with political ideas about this Psalm at once choose the former, and close the eye to the latter. Hupfeld calls these attributes "the fundamental human virtues which bear up the God-kingdom and human society in general." That means, that when peace and salvation arrive from God the people in the land will be merciful, truthful, do right, and live in peace. There is more than one objection that at once arises. Then v. 10 would be only a restatement of what has already been said in not turning to folly, but fearing the Lord. So we would have as one and the same thing both a requisite for receiving salvation, and a fruit of salvation. That will certainly not do. But look at

“peace.” Is the word in v. 10 merely the human virtue of peacefulness, while in v. 8 it is God’s gift of peace? How justify such a difference? No; peace is one and the same in both verses; nothing indicates the contrary. Finally, note the impressive figurative description, first in personifying these four attributes, then in describing what they do in v. 10 and the following. Why no figures when God’s gifts are mentioned in v. 8-9, and such exalted figures when man’s virtues are mentioned in v. 10 etc.? Something is out of balance. — There is only one conclusion: these are the Lord’s attributes, *his* mercy and truth, *his* righteousness and peace. The old English commentators have found the true sense, the modern Germans have missed it. But even so, we cannot agree that there are two contrary pairs here, and that these contrary pairs are first mercy and peace, and then truth or righteousness (or, as they say: righteousness and truth). The text does not read thus. Yes, there are two pairs, namely mercy and truth — one; righteousness and peace — another. But these are all harmonious, not in the least contrary. The spiritual glory that dwells with God’s children (“them that fear him”) is the Lord’s *chesed*, **mercy**, his divine favor, so often translated his “lovingkindness,” we would say “grace” in the New Testament. This *chesed* is fundamental for all the saints of God; they live by it day by day. Next there is *’emeth*, the Lord’s **truth**. Why say it is his law-truth, by which he must keep his law-threats against the sinner, when the mate here is “mercy” (grace)? Why, evidently this is the Lord’s covenant truth, Gospel truth, truth of his gracious promises. No wonder, picturing the two as two persons walking amid the saints, the Psalmist sees that they **are met together**, *phagash*, “to meet each other,” here the niphal. Why think of a meeting to settle a difference? Where is there such a hint? Those Englishmen meant better than the Germans, but they wore the wrong dog-

matical spectacles nevertheless. Why, these two meet as friends: mercy to carry out the blessed Gospel promise of covenant truth, and truth to show mercy how to carry that promise out. — The second pair are pictured in the same way, only the figure is more intense; instead of merely meeting and walking amiably side by side, we have kissing and embracing. *Tsedeq* is by no means the law-righteousness demanding the sinner's punishment, but the **righteousness** revealed in the covenant and its Gospel; *Bundestreue* Koenig calls it, the faithfulness by which God rightly carries out his covenant for every believer. Its mate here is **peace**, the same *shalom* which we met in v. 8, the peace which God declares, just as he declares the righteousness, the end of all anger and wrath for sin, the beginning of all well-being and safety. Why of course, these belong together, they are sisters! Who told those Englishmen that these sisters first had a difference and conflict, and then made up and kissed? Not even a hint like that here. They **kissed each other**, because they were in the most loving agreement, like sisters devoted to each other, like ardent lovers. Righteousness is bound to declare the penitent sinner just, so that peace is his now and for ever; and peace follows righteousness, so that they actually touch and kiss. And these four are the "glory" that dwells among them that fear the Lord; the spiritual earthly glory that descends from above, the advance glory that shall shine in heaven with new splendor. — Yet there is a beautiful chiasm here, which the Englishmen have seen in spite of their mistake. Draw a large X, and then write at the top points "mercy" — "truth"; and at the lower points "righteousness" — "peace"; and note how the one line connects "mercy" and "peace," and the other line "truth" and "righteousness." Mercy leads to peace; truth leads to righteousness. Where mercy is shed abroad it fills us with God's peace; where Gospel truth is received it fills

us with Gospel righteousness (Christ, justification). No cheap thing here like human virtue; nothing here but the Lord's own glory.

In v. 11 one each of the pairs of sisters is repeated, with two parallel new figures. It is as if the poet, having shown us two pairs side by side, now joins those two pairs in the middle. Of course, this is the same truth and righteousness as in v. 10. But the Hebrew tenses are different: two perfects in v. 10 for definite acts; two imperfects in v. 11 for continued acts. **Truth shall spring out of the earth**, cannot mean that the virtue of human truth shall spring up from the hearts of godly men; because the next line cannot mean similarly that the virtue of human righteousness shall look down from heaven. Kittel, who is one that clings to the human virtue idea, finds himself compelled in this second line to make righteousness look out of the windows of heaven "like one of the good heavenly spirits" — which, of course, is no longer exegesis at all. *Tsamach* does mean originally "to sprout" or grow, but then metaphorically (and here we have figurative language of the most evident kind) it means "to begin to take place," "to unfold itself," and thus "to take place." So now, when God sends the glory of his gifts to those that fear him, his Gospel truth can and will unfold itself among his saints, like beautiful thrifty plants. The promises contained in that truth of his (the Word) will be realized more and more as they unfold in fulfillment. Where there is no fear of the Lord in men's hearts all is barren and dead around them — not a single promise of truth can bring forth a plant of fulfillment. How could it? Only the lightning and thunder of the divine anger can have place. — The second line is parallel to the first: **and righteousness shall look down from heaven**. Truth is pictured as on the earth, because God gave it to men by revelation and Inspiration, and we have it in the written

Word. When by faith we take it into our hearts its promises begin to fulfill themselves for us. But righteousness as God's gift to his believers is his gracious verdict pronounced from his judicial throne in heaven. Each of us indeed embraces it by faith in his heart, but this righteousness ever will remain God's verdict in heaven, not a thing that takes place in us, but far away from us, up above. So here righteousness is properly pictured in connection with heaven. Yet it does not remain locked up in heaven like a deep mystery of which no man can see or know a thing. It shall ever and ever, for every true believer, "look down from heaven," *shakaph*, "look out" upon the believer here below. The figure is the more beautiful and expressive when we think that God himself is always connected with his verdict on the believer, and that by this verdict he looks graciously and kindly from his lofty throne on the believer here below. Nor is this looking down an invisible thing for the believer. The Word opens his eyes so that by it he can look up not only to heaven, but right into the heart of God where this verdict declaring him righteous is spoken. For the unbeliever the heavens are black; or they are brass. But for the believer all is light, heaven's windows are open wide, and there is his righteousness from God looking down on him, spreading her hands in benediction over him; and no man shall ever close those windows for him or bar him from their view.

Hering is sure that in v. 12 "the earthly blessings" are finally brought in. Spurgeon feels the same way; others follow, even Plumer. But Benj. Kennicott rebels in no uncertain words: "Could the prophets, after all the rapturous things said before, coldly say here, that God 'would give what was good' — and that Judea would have 'a plentiful harvest'? No; consistency and good sense forbid it; and truth confirms their protest against it." Observe these points: first, we have seen the divine attributes in figurative action in v. 10-11,

and now according to the way of these inspired poets we should expect a literal interpretation of those figures. That is exactly what we have in v. 12. Secondly, to make *hattob* mean mere earthly good would be the weakest kind of an anticlimax after the great figures of the personified divine attributes. Even a poor secular poet would avoid such a lame come-down. Thirdly, *hattob* is not merely "that which is good," a sort of collective carry-all into which to pack a general collection of earthly good things; the substantivised singular with the definite article forbids that. Finally *gam*, quite well translated "yea," adds to v. 10-11, not something less, but something at least equal, or something still greater. — **Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good**, should be translated: "the good," or as Kennicott puts it THE BLESSING. In this giving of *The Blessing* we have the sum and climax of all that the great covenant Lord will bestow in his covenant grace, by all the attributes we have seen active. It is The Supreme Good for which his people looked and prayed, namely the complete Messianic salvation. The verb *nathan* shows that it is a pure gift of grace. Kennicott makes "The Blessing" signify the Messiah himself; but it does not seem that *hattob* here is personified. His own reference to Jer. 33, 14 etc.: "*that good thing* which I have promised," makes this clear. Where in the previous verses we had the personified attributes we now see that they mean "the Lord," Yahveh himself. Where we have seen the individual attributes coming among us and looking down upon us in such significant harmony and friendliness, we now see their full purpose: the gift of the Messianic salvation. — This picture of the Messianic blessing as imaged by the Old Testament prophets and poets includes "the earth." The second line would be made much clearer if the verb were translated to correspond to the verb in the first line: **and our land shall yield her increase**, should here read: "shall give her in-

crease," for in both lines we have the significant *nathan* of grace, first *yiththen*, and now *thiththen*. Jehovah "shall give," and correspondingly the earth "shall give." This second giving is part of the Lord's Messianic Blessing. Few, it seems, have looked into this subject properly, and hence we are handed interpretations that are not even true, and preachers are led to make applications that their own members can see are not true. Let us clear this matter up. In their view the old prophets saw the entire Messianic Blessing or Kingdom as just one whole. They thus beheld in their great vision also the new heavens and the new earth purified of all the effects of sin. Sometimes they use the pigments of Paradise to paint the lovely picture. When the great Kingdom shall be fully attained there shall be no more noxious animals, no more storms and devastations, and nothing to prevent the earth giving her most beautiful and best to man. So we have passages like this line in our Psalm, and like Ps. 67, 6, and the descriptions of Isaiah and others. Now in the old covenant, by way of types and shadows of this perfect state to come, Jehovah promised his people similar blessings. Read Lev. 26, 4-6, and compare Ez. 34, 25-31; Zech. 8, 11-12; Ps. 81, 16; 147, 14. In our own text note thus the possessive: "*our* land." All this was typical of the perfect state of the new earth in the great final Messianic era. But when the grand old covenant merged into the new, when instead of one separate chosen nation God's people were scattered far and wide among all nations, the types and symbols that marked the old covenant ceased. And with them there ceased also the types of fruitful yields, rich earthly abundance and prosperity. These types had done their duty. For us now who live before the consummation of the new covenant there are no such promises as Israel had in its covenant. The order of nature moves along under divine providence according to Gen. 8, 22; even

Jesus tells us that the Father "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," Matth. 5, 45. We are now promised "much tribulation," which may often enough mean the opposite of abundant harvests and prosperity. Not that there are no promises for the godly now regarding earthly things: "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things; . . . all these things shall be added unto you," Matth. 6, 32-33. Beyond that there is little. So it would be a grave mistake for us to preach that the godly will always have abundant harvests, etc.; or that the harvests and prosperity of our nation depend on its being godly. Yet the old covenant types stand, and what they reflected will appear in due time. The Lord of the earth will combine in giving it to his people when the Messianic Kingdom reaches its period of glory.

The final verse pictures the Lord as actually among his people, not merely sending them his gifts from a distance. **Righteousness shall go before him** as his standard bearer, "and shall take heed to the way of his steps"; not: **and shall set us in the way of his steps**. *Yasem* is the hiphil of *sim-sum*, and the hiphil denotes "to have regard to," to watch or heed. So the second line has nothing to do with following after the Lord, as Hering and the Englishmen read it: "following him, walking in his tracks." Righteousness leads the way, and does it so that it heeds the Lord's steps, i. e. that they shall all be in the way of righteousness. This is saying in a different way what is often declared of the Lord. "The Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings," Mal. 4, 2. "But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream," Amos 5, 24. This is the righteousness that kisses peace, and that looks so benignantly from heaven. When in the new earth the Lord comes to his people, to be their God, and they his people, Rev. 21, 3, it will be, of course, with mercy,

truth, and peace, but righteousness shall be the outstanding attribute. Every one of the Lord's steps (acts) shall be righteousness. His whole people shall be wholly covered with righteousness. When he showed them mercy, it was to make them righteous; when he gave them truth, it was to send them righteousness; when he covered them with peace and salvation, it was because he had clothed them in righteousness. In the last judgment, when Christ comes to judge the whole world, righteousness shall be his standard bearer, righteousness shall watch his steps that none deviate from the norm of right. The righteous alone he will gather. His eternal kingdom shall be all righteousness, he himself in his glory the Sun of Righteousness.

SUGGESTIONS

A proper exegesis will preserve us from themes like this: "The promise of a bright future for our nation and state in dismal times"; "How Christians thank God for the harvest" (by the way, the harvest-home text in this series is Ps. 34, 2-9, not our present text); "The longing for better times," and others along the same line. We will consider outlines like this in helping to direct our thoughts: "The Retinue of the Prince of Peace: 1) Mercy and truth walk before him; 2) Glory surrounds him; 3) Righteousness and peace go forth from him." B. Hoffmann. — "God's Thoughts regarding His People: 1) They are thoughts of peace; 2) He carries them out in truth; 3) And in the power of his grace; 4) But in harmony with his righteousness." Note how these outlines deal with only the great concepts in the text. In fact, there is only about one way to treat this text, namely synthetically, by arranging its great concepts in some adequate order disregarding pretty much the order in which they appear in the text itself. Texts like this one are the despair of the man who preaches only analytically by using the pieces of the text seriatim in the order given. And we have no comfort to offer him whatever, and hardly any sympathy. Of course, in any synthetical arrangement we may use some helpful and fitting auxiliary concept, say as a string on which to arrange the pearls of the text, and also as an em-

bellishment or setting in which to place these jewels. Thus the word "give" not only occurs in the text itself, but "giving" underlies all that the Psalmist here tells us. It is an excellent auxiliary concept:

The Supreme Sum of God's Gifts to His People.

I. Salvation, with all that produces it.

Salvation: the gift of mercy — of truth — of righteousness.

II. Salvation, with all that it produces.

Salvation: The gift that preserves from folly — bestows the fear of the Lord — blesses with peace — leads to the new earth, where the Sun of Righteousness shines forever.

All God's children wear a golden necklace set with priceless heavenly jewels. It is God's wonderful gift to them, finer than all earthly rubies and diamonds. Are you wearing this necklace today? Folly would snatch it from you; the fear of the Lord keeps it safe on your breast.

The Jewels of Your Heavenly Necklace.

I. The clasp: the fear of the Lord.

II. The four jewels: mercy and truth — righteousness and peace.

III. The golden pendant: salvation.

The personifications used in the text may be made to serve the sermon in its very structure. — In the city of the Lord where his saints dwell, the voice of the Lord is heard. He sends his messengers into this city and among his people. How lovely the language they speak! They all tell harmoniously of one grand subject, the one about which our souls cannot hear enough. That subject is SALVATION. In the end the Lord who sent us these great messengers will himself appear, and one of them will march like a heavenly standard bearer before him.

The Glory Messengers of Salvation.

I. Look at their faces — how each reflects part of the glory

II. Hear their voices — what each has to tell us about God, and how glorious it is.

- III. Watch their actions—how expressive of God's glorious thoughts toward us: mercy and truth meet; righteousness and peace kiss. Righteousness especially does much, for it is the main messenger: looks down from heaven, walks at last before the Lord.*
- IV. Take their message into your hearts, expel folly, fear the Lord, praise him like the Psalmist.*

In part one I would name each messenger, show him as a true representative of the Lord (in fact one of his attributes), thus reflecting the Lord himself and his attitude towards us. In part two I would use some of the choicest Bible passages voicing mercy, truth, etc.; and bring out that these are the true thoughts concerning us. In part three I would use the exegesis on the actions named in the text, lifting righteousness into special prominence. Part four is easy, and makes an effective conclusion.

Christians are often but poor people, some of them always. 1 Cor. 1, 26 etc. Some, of course, have wealth like Abraham and David; but their true wealth is of a different kind.

How Rich the Saints of God!

I. In mercy; II. In truth; III. In righteousness; IV. In peace; and thus V. In salvation.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Job 14, 1-5

Four texts are left for *the Earthly Close of the Godly Life*. These last after-Trinity Sundays have always been devoted to the subjects that center in the Christian's departure from this world. Yet when one takes up the four proposed texts for this last sub-cycle, he will wonder why there should be in so small a group two texts so alike in general thought as the first two here offered, namely Ps. 39, 4-13 and Job 14, 1-5. Both deal with the brevity of our earthly lives because of our sins. One text on this subject is enough. Perhaps the selection was made with a view of omitting the one or the other of these texts, because we very seldom have all twenty-seven Sundays after Trinity, and so some omissions simply have to be made. Be that as it may, after mature consideration we ourselves have decided to drop one of these texts, namely Ps. 39, 4-13 set for The Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity. In its place we have put Job 14, 1-5, moving it forward one Sunday. To fill the gap we have selected Job 19, 23-27, because we think it is far preferable to have, instead of two texts on the brevity of our lives, only one on this subject and one on the resurrection of the body. Now in our Old Testament series there is a place for the subject of our bodily resurrection, and a text which treats that subject; but unfortunately the place is Easter Monday, the so-called second Easter day, for which Ps. 16, 8-11 was selected. In our churches, however, these second great festival days are so little observed, that by far the great majority of our preachers and congrega-

tions would simply pass this resurrection text by, and thus this subject would drop out entirely. Here at the end of the after-Trinity series is another fitting place for the subject of the resurrection of the body as the godly man's great hope. So we have ventured to make this change; and we use Job 19 in preference to Ps. 16, because the Job text seems more fitting for the close of the Church Year. — Thus we will have in the final sub-cycle:

- 1) The brevity of our earthly lives, Job 14, 1-5.
- 2) The resurrection of the body, Job 19, 23-27.
- 3) The joy of final deliverance, Ps. 126.
- 4) Our anticipation of the blessed hereafter, Is. 35, 3-10.

The last of these texts has been selected with a view to the significance of the last Sunday in every Church Year. For no matter how many or how few after-Trinity Sundays may appear on the calendar of any individual year, the final Sunday is always celebrated as the *Totenfest*, a Memorial Sunday for our Christian dead, and thus the subject of this Sunday is by great preference heaven and the blessedness which our beloved dead now enjoy. This idea, of course, has nothing whatever to do with the American Memorial Day, which is meant for the dead soldiers of the nation, whether Christian or non-Christian, and thus not a Christian festival day at all.

See The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, Job 5, 17-26, on the problem of suffering in the book of Job; on Job's own faulty view concerning his own suffering; and on the question of using words like those of Eliphaz as texts for preaching. Our text is from Job's third reply. After the third comfortless comforter had finished his harsh words, Job answers him and in his answer attacks all three comforters together, chapters 12-14. We do not need here an outline of

Job's strong reply. Only, this the preachers must know, these three chapters, and thus also our text, are words of Job, and of Job alone. Now Job when he spoke these words was still in the dark in regard to the character and purpose of his suffering; and this ignorance shows itself, and is intended to show itself, in his words. The charges made against Job by his three friends are wrong, but Job's answers also are wrong to a great extent, especially in those parts where Job complains against God. Now it is true all these speeches are recorded for us by divine Verbal Inspiration; but this does not mean that the three friends of Job, or Job himself, were inspired when they spoke, far from it, for much of what they said was spoken in ignorance; but that the author of the book of Job set these their ignorant and wrong speeches down for us by Inspiration. God wanted us to know just how men speak in their ignorance, and how a partially enlightened godly man speaks, so that we can see and study their faulty thoughts. Therefore it will not do to read our text with the bare preamble: "Hear the Word of God, recorded in the Book of Job, chapter 14, verses 1-5." Our hearers might think that God spoke thus, when it was really Job who spoke thus and then from considerable ignorance. These are words of Holy Writ, set down in the inspired record for our learning, that is all. Daechsel is right: "We dare not use his (Job's) words without care, and not without adding Ps. 90, 7-8." In other words: anything that Job says is not God's own Word in the sense of divine truth, just because Job said it and it is put down for us in the book named after him. It may be divine truth, but that is evinced by other clear passages which contain that truth. Now v. 1-2 are divine truth beyond question, as also these verses voice our universal human experience. So also v. 4-5 are divine truth, as all Scripture testifies. But v. 3 is a mistaken deduction of Job, and in the sense in which

Job uttered v. 3 he expressed a wrong view of God. That wrong view is valuable, because we might ourselves think and speak wrongly in the same manner. It is recorded here in order that we may see what is wrong about it, correct the matter, and be the more sure of the right view. As far as the sermon is concerned there need be no trouble at all. Just introduce Job and tell how he mistakenly judged God, and how he and we with him ought to think of God. — With these cautions in mind let us look at Job's words in detail.

1. **Man that is born of a woman
is of few days and full of trouble.**
2. **He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut
down:
he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth
not.**
3. **And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an
one,
and bringest me into judgment with thee?**

We hear the funeral bell tolling as we read the first two verses, which have been embodied in our funeral liturgy. God himself called the first pair of human beings "Adam," Gen. 5, 2, in the day they were created; so Stosch is right, the term **man**, Hebrew *'adam*, was at first a name of honor, and the head of our race bore the name as such. But sin and the curse changed this: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Gen. 3, 19. Now "man" as *'adam* means a creature fallible and frail; he is now a mortal, one subject to death. — Job emphasizes this idea of man by the adjective addition: **born of a woman**; lit.: "woman-born" man, *y'lud*, passive participle *qal*. A weak woman bears her child with

pain, was unclean after the birth among the Jews, hence her child from the very moment of its birth has as it dowry weakness, pain, uncleanness. Eve's firstborn personified guilt, her secondborn mortality and death. Inherited sin and inherited misery mark every one born of a woman, save Christ alone. — We may supply the copula "is," and add the next two adjectives as predicates; or, like Delitzsch, read the adjectives as appositional modifiers of 'adam, and make 'adam the subject of the verbs in v. 2. We prefer the former. **Of few days**, or "short of days," describes with classic brevity man's perishableness. Even when he reaches three score or four score years, how short is his little round of life? — And not only that, but he is **full of trouble**, "satiated with unrest," Koenig translates: "loaded with." There is a striking contrast between this shortness and this fulness — so few days, so many troubles. And there is another somewhat paradoxical contrast between the satiety and the absence of rest or good fortune. The very thing we do not want we are loaded down with, and the very thing we do want we cannot get at all. Life is indeed a gift of God, even our brief and troubled life. It is God who brings us into the world by his providence at our birth. He gives us the light of every day we live in this life, though the days are few enough. Job does not here deny these facts or refuse to give God due credit for them. He is dwelling on other facts, namely those that his terrible affliction has forced upon his attention. In this respect he resembles Moses who beheld the great dying of the children of Israel during the desert journey, and then sang so sorrowfully in the Ninetieth Psalm, v. 5 etc. It is good for us also to think of these darker facts, especially when another Church Year begins to close. There is, however, a difference that should be observed. When unbelievers see these facts they murmur and complain with a wicked inner rebellion or a false, stoic

resignation. So did the old pagan writers deal with these phenomena of life. When enlightened children of God read Job's words they recall their inborn sin and their sinful deeds and bow in repentance before God and take refuge in his grace which plants the true joy and happiness even in their short lives, carries them through all trouble, and brings them to a blessed end. When that end does come quickly, it is no calamity for them. Job, however, belonged to neither of these two classes; he was neither pagan nor a fully enlightened child of God. He was a believer passing through a severe trial of his faith. "Not from hatred and opposition to God, but from weakness of faith and timidity of heart" did he speak; so there is in these words as Job meant them a tone of complaint, a feeling of deep depression. He is not keeping his balance between undue optimism and undue pessimism; he is swaying toward the latter. When the clouds thicken in our lives and the hour of our trial comes let us take warning from Job. It was for this reason that the drama of his trial was put into the inspired Record.

The brevity of man's life is now described figuratively: **He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down.** *Tsits* means a diadem, and then the bloom of a flower. Like that man comes forth, *yatsa'*, developing into the bloom of youth and manhood. But this beautiful part is not the point here in Job's mind. It is brought in only to heighten the sadness of the next verb which completes the picture: **and is cut down.** Delitzsch has a long discussion on *yimmal*, in which he persuades himself that the word is the future niphal from *malal* and thus must mean "will be cut down," similar to our version. Koenig shows two verbs: *malal* (*'amel*) and *malal* (*mul*). The latter means "to circumcise," which settles the main contention of Delitzsch, and the niphal means "to be circumcised." In our text we have the former verb, the im-

perfect kal, which is intransitive (not transitive like the other), and means "to wither." So we should translate: "and withereth," i. e. the imperfect: does this regularly. Only some flowers are cut down, most of them are not hit by the scythe. Moreover, the idea in our line is not that of birth and then death, but of youthful bloom and beauty and then fading and decline. Nor is the thought here of any violence done to man, as when the sickle sunders a stalk of flowers. While death may so be pictured, here the figure will not allow it; for Job speaks of any and every flower. If these blooms were *not* cut down they certainly would not go on blooming. No; Job is speaking of their natural fate — they all wither soon; their petals lose vitality, fade, and drop away, and all the glory is gone. In this respect the figure of the flower is the more expressive, since so many of them bloom so short a time, the grand cereus only one night, many others only a night and a morning, or a single day, and the longest bloomers only a few days — then inevitably they fade away. — The parallel figure substantiates this: **he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not**, does not stand still for an instant. This figure is more than a parallel. That of the flower named the two termini: opening bloom — withering. The second figure covers what lies between: fleeing and thus fleeting, and never halting. A shadow changes every instant. So every tick of the clock moves us forward another notch toward death. Time is one of the greatest marvels of creation. Since that word in Gen. 1, 1 "in the beginning" it has flowed on with unchanging speed till this moment, and flows on still, never faster, never slower, never a halt, save those 24 hours when at Joshua's request the sun did stand still. Into this stream your life and mine was cast. Inexorably it was carried forward and will be carried thus, until God's hand lifts your soul and mine out of this stream at death, and until at the last tick

of the clock time shall cease, and our bodies also shall enter timelessness, which is what eternity means (the opposite of time). Job was right in this picturing of human life, its brevity, its transitoriness. What he said in complaint under stress of trial, we must learn to say with repentance and faith in humble and yet hopeful submission. For we know the life in which no blooms fade, no shadow darkens and moves toward night. In v. 3 Job utters his complaint. There is a tone of complaint in v. 1-2, though Job, we may say, in a way resigns himself to this brevity of human life including his burden of trouble. But now he looks at his own desperate state of suffering, and addresses God himself: **And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, etc.?** 'Aph = *insuper* (not merely "and"), "moreover," as if all this brevity and trouble were not enough, and God had to add still another great load to the already excessive burden. "Dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one," means: Dost thou watch him critically to see whether thou canst spy out some fault or sin for which to exact still more? We see at once that this is an unworthy thought to harbor against God. God is not ill-intentioned toward us poor mortals. When he puts a child of his under trial, it is not to bring that child to still greater grief. Here where Job tries to blame God, he himself becomes blameworthy, and to no small degree. — When Job said "such an one" he meant himself, and this critical watching is expressive of hostile intent: **and bringest me into judgment with thee?** i. e. so that I have to face thee in judgment. The implication is that Job, of course, would be utterly helpless in this case; for who could put up a successful defense when God charges him with sins and wrongs after critically having watched and gathered evidence. Job intimates that this is how God is treating him, and that his terrible sufferings are the result of the adverse *shaphat*, or judgment, which God has rendered against

him. That was no small charge against God. In fact, Job was taking God into his *shaphat*, or judgment, and was finding God guilty. We, of course, know what the trouble was. Job could not find the true solution for his great suffering. He was groping around in the dark, bumping against something now here, and now there. In this respect he resembled his own three blind comforters. They blamed Job for his own sufferings, charging him with some special secret sin which he would not acknowledge. They took it that God was trying to press a confession out of Job. They were just as wrong about God as was Job, who thought God was bent on finding something against him.

4. Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean?

not one.

**5. Seeing his days *are* determined,
the number of his months *are* with thee,
thou hast appointed his bounds that he
cannot pass.**

This is Job's complaining reply to the idea that God is watching him to bring something against him, and this present great sufferings have some such cause. What Job here says is in itself perfectly true, as all Scripture corroborates. But while true, and thus to be recognized and used by us all, Job's use of these truths in support of his complaint against God is not justifiable, and of course we are not to follow him in any similar use. **Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean?** is really a question that answers itself. But *mi yiththen*, lit.: "who will give," has come to have the optative sense of wish: "Oh that a clean thing might come out of an unclean!" or: "Would that someone might bring" etc. The sense is the same: such a thing, or such a wish, is in vain. The adjective *tahor* is meant here in the religious and moral sense:

sinless, or guiltless. Likewise the adjective *tame'*, sinful, or covered with guilt. — The incomplete second line: **not one** adds Job's own answer. The idea is broad. We may take a man as he is born of a human mother — how can the child be morally clean when it is born of a morally guilty mother? Or we may take a child by itself — how can a clean life come from a child that is unclean? Or we may take a heart — how can clean thoughts, words, and deeds come from a heart that is corrupt with sin? Job here uses the universal sinfulness of all men from their very origin on against God's looking for evil in Job for which to punish him in an especially severe way. His meaning is: it would be only too easy for God to find such evil, since all men are wholly corrupt from the start. But why then should God single out Job for such treatment? Daechsel gives Job's sense as follows: "How canst thou visit me, who hath loaded on himself no greater guilt than all the other unclean ones, with punishments still greater and especial tortures? Should not we men, just because perfect cleanness is absolutely impossible for us, the rather deserve indulgence and clemency?" And Delitzsch writes: "Job recognizes, like his friends, an inherited sinfulness; but for such an unmerciful penal infliction, as his seems to him to be, this sinfulness is not an explanation, rather man seems to him, since absolute purity is impossible for him, an object of divine indulgence and divine mercy." Job's question and answer have always been recognized as voicing adequately the fact of original sin or inborn depravity among all men as descendents of Adam. Job himself meant them so.

The verse now following is read in our English version as an extended subordinate clause to v. 6; but it can be read just as well as a subordinate set of clauses appended to v. 4. Stosch does the latter: "Since his days", etc. **Seeing that his days are determined**, is thus read as evidence for man's

universal sinfulness from birth on. *Charutsim* is the passive participle from *charats*: such as are cut off, and thus fixed and determined, so many and no more. — To this is added a synonymous line: **the number of his months are with thee**, i. e. known to thee because thou hast determined in advance how many they shall be. — And a third line explains: **thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass; chuqqah**, a statute or law, and “bounds,” hast thou made, and he cannot pass it. But the meaning of Job is not at all that God has predetermined the day of each man’s birth and death, and thus the exact length of his life, but that because of the sinfulness of all men God has determined that all men, after a brief period of earthly life, must inevitably die without the possibility of escaping this death. V. 5 is merely an elaboration of the “few days” in v. 1, and of the flower and the shadow in v. 2. And this thought is here used by Job, not in a legitimate way to humble us and himself before God, that we may use our few days by seeking God’s grace early, Ps. 90, 14, but in order to show that God is not treating Job fairly and justly. Why should God who has already made our lives so short and placed temporal death at their end because of our sinfulness, not be satisfied with this inexorable infliction? Why should he yet add to Job these intolerable sufferings?

So we see Job’s thought: all men are sinners from birth, and as a result all of them alike have lives that are short and troubled and soon end in death. Against that Job says nothing; he is ready to submit to that in all humility, even as others also do. But now he argues wrongly: Is not this enough for God? Should he yet demand more? Should he perhaps spy out sin in our lives and add on, as in Job’s case, such a terrible extra load of suffering? That is how Job feels God is treating him. Not that Job has any special sin above other men — he knows that is not the case. Yet the

terrible suffering is there. He can find no other way to solve the problem except by questioning God's fairness. His faith weakens, it yields to this wrong and unworthy thought. Let us learn from him to beware of such thoughts.

SUGGESTIONS

There are two ways to preach on this text; one, to leave Job's problem out, the other to include that problem. The preacher may choose. In the *Sermon Sketches on O. T. Texts* Geo. Hein omits Job's problem and offers the following: "A Sobering Estimate of Human Life: 1) At most human life is brief, and death waits outside the door; 2) At best human life is sinful, and judgment sits on the throne." Job is here only incidentally mentioned, and v. 3 is generalized to refer to Job's general sinfulness, instead of some particular fault which God was charged with spying out. — So we may preach:

Job's Sermon to us

On the Significant Brevity of Human Life.

That sermon puts the brevity of human life before us that you

- I. *Think of it.* — Too many live as if they were never to die. Job's sermon is corroborated by all Scripture, by daily experience (you have often heard v. 1-2 spoken beside open graves), by our own sober thought, when we do think; and yet how shallow the impression. Watch the fading flower, the fleeting shadow — then think. They picture your life.
- II. *Understand it.* — Is this merely the course of nature? It is a way, namely of nature as now constituted. It is not, for God did not so create us. This brevity and dying is the result of sin. We Christians have forgiveness of sin, and yet we die. We die because we are still sinners and sin daily. The notion that God arbitrarily fixes the hour of death is pagan and Mohammedan. There is a providence indeed (explain it), but our sin makes us die, just as our sin also darkens life with trouble.

- III. *Draw the right conclusion from it.* — Always reckon with death. Cling not to this world. Make sure of forgiveness by repentance and faith. Accept death patiently, humbly, and with sure and certain hope.

**“Man that is Born of Woman is of Few Days and
Full of Trouble.”**

Use the scene which these words recall, and explain each feature of it in the light and in the spirit of the text. These words connect us with:

- I. *An open grave.* — Picture the solemn fact of death — young and old — bodily decline, v. 2 — God’s providence in each case. Let the solemnity and seriousness impress you. You need this solemn reminder.
- II. *The departed.* — Picture the terrible fact of sin which has caused this death, v. 4. Born in sin we live as sinners, and die because we are sinners, v. 5. How men ignore this connection. We need to get a full convincing and convicting view of it.
- III. *The mourners and friends.* — Picture them “full of trouble.” How differently they bear it; some hardly affected, callous; some just giving way to grief; some with superficial, false comfort; some, thank God, with comfort from on high. Have you been among such a group? What were your emotions and thoughts? Have they left you a blessing?
- IV. *The preacher.* — Was he a false prophet? There are such, picture them. Did he have only part of the truth? Picture these. Was he a man of God who had the full truth and did his duty? Picture how he spoke and applied the Gospel, and restate that Gospel, and do not make it too brief. “Blessed are the dead, which die from henceforth” etc. Is that Gospel in your soul as you approach nearer and nearer to the hour when the words of our theme shall be spoken over your grave?

Similar outlines may be arranged under other themes suggested by the text, for instance: Job’s Sermon on the Flower that is Cut Down, and The Shadow that Fleeth. Or, How Do You Answer the Question: “Who Can Bring a Clean

Thing out of An Unclean?" (1) With cold reason? 2) With skillful evasion? With a penitent heart?) — But Job's own case may be drawn into the sermon. When this is done the story or problem should not be unduly drawn out, but the fact should be briefly and strikingly presented so that an application is at once apparent. It is better to omit Job's peculiar case than to bungle it either by length or inadequate statement.

Note Ez. 14, 14 and James 5, 11. Though so highly spoken of by prophet and apostle, in Old and in New Testament, yet this man once complained about God. Let us learn never to murmur against the Almighty.

The Great Truth:

That Man is of Few Days and Full of Trouble.

- I. *We must know it well.* — Job did; see how clearly he states it. We may learn of him in this respect. He knows equally well what lies back of it, v. 4-5. And again we may learn of him. Let it all sink in deeply. — yet it is another thing to use the truth in the right way.
- II. *We must not use it to justify ourselves.* — Job did, v. 3, as though man's few days full of trouble were enough punishment for his sinfulness, and any further trials were unjust. What a mistake when we are severely tried! It attributes a false intention to God, who, though he has had to shorten our lives and add trouble, never intends our destruction. It robs us of all comfort in our trial, and in fact in our entire short, troubled life.
- III. *We must let it lead us to God's grace and mercy.* — It is a good thing, since we are born sinners and always sin in this life, that God has shortened our troubled days. Let us bow in constant humility and repentance. Let us cast ourselves on his love. He tries us for this very purpose. He wants us to have an undimmed faith, and so to pass out of this troubled life into a blessed eternity.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Job 19, 23-27

Just because this is a controverted text it deserves intense study, in order that we may get rid of the cloud of wrong interpretation which has been raised, and may ourselves stand firm and unshaken on the true sense of the precious words here recorded.

Job answered each of his three foolish friends in turn. Then they began a second round, and again Job answered each in turn. Our text is from the second speech of Job in this second round. It constitutes the climax in that speech. Some one has figured out that our text is the central section in the entire Book of Job. We have not troubled to verify it; if correct, it would be interesting.

23. Oh that my words were now written!
oh that they were printed in a book!
24. That they were graven with an iron pen
and lead in the rock for ever!
25. For I know *that* my redeemer liveth,
and that he shall stand at the latter day
upon the earth:
26. And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy
this *body*,
yet in my flesh shall I see God.
27. Whom I shall see for myself
and mine eyes shall behold, and not an-
other;
though my reins be consumed within me.

It is good homiletical as well as exegetical wisdom to study the emotions in a text. To get the strong feeling behind the words of our text we really should study the entire reply of Job from this angle. Look at v. 2-6; here Job rises and glares at his cruel comforters with lofty *indignation*. Now let v. 7-20 impress you: poor Job droops sadly and sighs in a long elegy of *self-pity*, telling us what he is enduring. This elegy reaches its lowest point in v. 21-22, where Job, pitiably crushed, actually *pleads* for pity from his friends. Thus from the height of indignation he glides down helplessly to the level of painful pleading. Let these feelings reflect themselves in your heart. But now a sudden change. Job all at once rises; he actually towers. Bolder, stronger, more imposing than ever he speaks the words of our text, v. 23-27. He seems no longer to be speaking to his false friends. His face seems turned to heaven, his hands raised to the skies. He is making his great confession of faith to God with a feeling of *triumph* in the midst of apparent defeat. Let the grandness of the act affect you. His friends may sit by and listen; at this moment they are immaterial. With the triumph still in his eyes and voice he suddenly turns on his friends in a concluding burst of *indignation*, in which he threatens them with God's own judgment. So the reply ends in the same tone in which it began.

Oh that my words were now written, begins with *mi yiththen* (lit.: "who will grant?" etc.), the Hebrew idiom for a fervent wish: "Would that" etc.; or: "Oh that" etc. And *'epho* is an emphatic "now," as we would say: "now right here." It is exactly in line with the idea of having the words which Job now utters written down for permanent record. Instead of the more usual future tense after the idiom for wishing, we here have the consecutive *vav*, with the niphal from *kathab*, "were written." *Millah* is the poetic term for "word." — What Job means is brought

out by the added line: **oh that they were printed in a book**, with *bassepher* (in this phrase always with the Hebrew article) emphatically forward: in a parchment scroll, the ancient writing roll. Job longs to have what he is now about to say permanently fixed and preserved in a record for all men to read as the confession and hope with which he died. This wish is highly rhetorical and dramatic, and must be read only in this way. When commentators coldly examine it at their desks they lose the fervor and burning feeling from which the wish burst forth. — It is the same with the duplication which flames up still higher: **That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!** To pen and parchment Job adds the chisel, the rock, and lead. The *'et* is the style or stone-cutter's tool with which he carves inscriptions on stone surfaces, which are made deep enough to be filled with lead for greater permanency. Of course, it is all right for Ewald to remark that stone inscriptions like this were well known in Job's time, that they were costly, and that Job was a man of power and wealth who could thus properly express a wish like this. But it is far more to the point to feel the full intensity of this dramatic wish of Job to have such a monument, not for his dead body indeed, for which he anticipates nothing but decay and dust, but for the living faith and undying hope with which he goes to his grave after all his unspeakable suffering, even intensified by the ignorant cruelty of the friends who should at least have pitied him, even if they really did not know how to comfort him.

We now come to the first decisive question in this much controverted text. What did Job mean by **my words** which he so earnestly desired to have preserved for all men to read *la'ad*, "for ever"? Here is the current answer: "These words of his, which he thus desires to see transmitted to future generations as a memorial, are, as it is most natural to suppose,

not those contained in v. 25 etc., but the sufferer's former protestations of innocence, the asseveration of innocent suffering which from chapter 6 on he has continually been putting forth." Lange and Philip Schaff. Many agree. Thus Volk and Oettli: "the oft repeated confession of his innocence"; Daechsel: "my being pure of the crimes imputed to me"; Delitzsch: "His testimony of innocence will not descend to posterity without having been justified before that posterity by the living God." This is quite an exegetical tradition to be built upon the slender foundation "as it is most natural to suppose." We respectfully ask: Is the determining of what Job meant by "my words" really left to our supposition? Then we prefer to do our supposing with the men on the other side, such as Hahn, Schlottmann, Scott, Barnes, Good, Bernard, Wordsworth, Rodwell, etc. But all this mere supposing does not satisfy at all; we decline a mere toss-up on exegetical questions. If really a point cannot be determined, let us say so; but let us not merely "suppose," and then say, because *we* do the supposing, it is "most natural." — Job cannot mean his protestations in the entire speech in which he utters this dramatic wish of his. Yes, if immediately preceding v. 23 Job had uttered a clear-cut protestation of this kind, one might think he wanted this recorded and engraved; but there is nothing of the kind. Especially when certain words are to be cut in rock one must know just what the words are; not only is that "most natural to suppose," it is more, it is absolutely necessary. But here "words" are to be cut into rock which are scattered around in several speeches among a lot of other words. Moreover, they are "words" which as protestations of innocence can be understood only when read in connection with the accusations which called them forth. It is preposterous to think that words like that are the ones meant by Job to be cut in rock. Finally, Job's wish, doubly expressed, is the

height of dramatics. The "words" he refers to must accord with this height — they must be words fully meriting this supreme dramatic fervor. Now we actually have words of this very character immediately following Job's dramatic wish, namely v. 25-27 b. There is only one really exegetical conclusion: Job meant these words. Rank his protestations of innocence in past speeches as high as we please, all commentators even down to the little ones, are unanimous that v. 25-27 b are the greatest words which Job uttered in all his speeches. We thus find ourselves forced to conclude that Job wanted these "my words" permanently recorded and cut in stone. They voice the climax of his faith and sure and certain hope; they crown his innocence and make Job worthy of remembrance to the end of time. If merely his own claims of innocence against unjust charges are to be cut in stone, what then shall we do with these golden words of faith and hope? Let the men who merely do supposing on this matter answer that.

Here is the first line to be engraved: **For I know that my redeemer liveth.** Think how much more these few words contain than any claim of innocence Job has voiced! The English "for" is not good, though it follows the LXX and the Vulgate translations. — Luther has *aber*, as if the adversative was meant for the sentence thus headed. Volk and Oettli in Strack and Zoëckler's commentary interpret accordingly: "It does not need this that the testimony of his innocence descend to posterity, in order that posterity may do him justice." The fact is that this *v^e* in *va'ani* puzzles those who think Job is so extremely concerned about carrying his own testimony of innocence to all posterity. They even overlook that when a man has no support for his own testimony regarding himself, that testimony alone is not admitted — a principle which even Jesus, the truest witness that ever spoke, obeyed in his own case, John 5, 31; 8, 54.

— Delitzsch thinks that the inscription Job cries out for could not properly begin with *v^e*; that it could hardly begin even with *ki*, “for.” The trouble with Delitzsch is that he considers the adversative and the coordinating *v^e* only as they apply to sentences. It is thus that he finds it hard to decide, and finally chooses the coordination. He makes Job wish to have his innocence engraved in rock, and then makes him add to that wish by means of *v^e* his expression of faith and hope. But Job does neither: he does not utter his wish, and then, thinking it cannot be fulfilled anyway, put his confession in place of the wish; nor does he utter his wish, and then add to that wish his confession. Both of these alternatives would require the *v^e* with the verb. — This *v^e* belongs only to *'ani*, not to the whole sentence, and emphasizes *'ani*, that is all. The Revised Version as well as the Jewish translation have it correctly: “But as for me, I know” etc., with the significant comma after “me.” Kautsch and Weizsaecker probably are also correct: *Ich aber weiss*. In English one may use either “but” or “and”: “But as for me,” or: “And as for me.” Yet “but” as well as “and” are inferior in giving the sense of emphasis only to *'ani*, the Hebrew pronoun “I.” The inflection of the verb already appends the subject “I”; hence to add *'ani*, the pronoun, stresses this subject, and adding *v^e* to *'ani* intensifies “I” still more. We might translate: “Now as for me, I know” etc. The idea is: so far as I for my person am concerned, I know that my redeemer liveth, etc. There is therefore no reason in the world why this inscription may not begin with *vav*, namely a *vav* emphasizing *'ani*.

When Job says: **I know**, he means the inner conviction of his heart, hence the knowledge of faith. What follows is therefore a confession of his faith. Made as it is in the face of expected death, it is the more weighty. For Job had come to feel that nothing would be done by God to relieve him, that undoubtedly

he would die in his misery even before his innocence had been vindicated. But we must add still more to the glorious faith which thus said: "I know." This is said in the face of what Job supposed to be injustice on God's part in making him suffer so without just cause. Job had felt this so keenly that he even murmured against God and charged him with injustice. That was his weakness of faith under the severe trial. Yet after all, his faith rises again, rallies its strength, and makes this confession. It is like his word in chapter 12, v. 13: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." — Job knows that **my redeemer liveth, go'el**. This Hebrew term ordinarily means the nearest relative who had these duties: to ransom a relative thrown into slavery; to avenge a relative if killed; to buy back ground which a relative had to sell because of poverty; to marry the childless widow of a relative and raise up seed for him. Some try to use all four functions in Job's statement; but this strains the term. *Go'el* came to mean in general a vindicator, one who steps in to secure the rights of an abused person, or avenge one who is dead. This is the sense here. — And this great vindicator of Job is living, *chay*, in the sense of *chay ha'olam*, Dan. 12, 7, living for ever. Recall how *chay* is used in oaths: "as I live," "as Elohim liveth," etc. The entire context puts *chay* in opposition to Job's own death, as well as the death of his comforters, in fact of all men. Job's vindicator knows no death; he is the eternal, ever-living One. Like almost everything else in this text so also this is denied. Volk follows Eichhorn and the rationalists, and his teacher, von Hofmann, in claiming that there is no thought here of Job dying, and that Job is not thinking of a justification after his own death in the world to come, but of a justification in this life against these his accusers. It is enough to say that Job has already plainly said that he expects to die, and to die without God justifying him before

his end; that this emphatic *chay* would be curious if a vindicator in Job's life is meant; and that all that follows speaks of Job's death, and must be maltreated to make it refer to his life.

The second line for the great inscription is equally grand: **and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.** This translation reads '*acharon* as an adverb: "at last," "later," and thus "at the latter day." The Jewish translation does the same thing: "at the last." Yet adverbs usually are next to their verbs in Hebrew, and besides '*acharon* is here emphatically forward. It is plain, this is the adjective substantivized: "he shall stand as the last (one) on the dust," when all others have died and turned to dust. Delitzsch puts it well: "as the Last One, whose word shall avail in the ages of eternity, when the strife of human voices shall have long been silent." Note, too, how "liveth" tallies with "last one." Yet, as between our version: "at the latter day," to which the R. V. agrees: "at last," and the exact rendering: "as the last (one)," there is little more than formal difference, since this Goel will show himself as the Last One by appearing at the last day.—**Upon the earth** is literally: "upon the dust." But here again debate bursts out. We are told that the phrase simply means that the Goel will appear on earth, as God also did in the story of Job, and that the words say nothing about the dust of the grave, especially not the dust at the end of time. But look at Job 7, 21; 8, 19; 10, 9; 17, 16; 20, 11; 21, 26; 34, 15. This "dust" is beyond the shadow of a doubt the dust in which our own dust is laid when we die. If an appearance of God were meant such as the end of our book describes, "on the dust" would be wholly out of place, for God never arises on the dust when he appears, and at the end of the book God spoke out of the storm, not from the dust. The bold assertion that '*aphar* never means "grave" is flatly contradicted by Koenig, who in his

Woerterbuch gives a number of passages and ends with "etc." — The verb **shall stand**, *yaqum*, from *qum*, lit.: "will arise," is idiomatic for favorable intervention on the part of a judge, and thus conveys considerably more than the ordinary English "shall stand" suggests. But this arising and standing forth to vindicate Job "on the dust," into which the bodies of the dead together with Job's body sank, and with which their dead dust mingled, and that at the end of time as the Last One, implies more than is usually observed. All this grand act cannot be understood aright without the resurrection of the body. We shall meet the view in the next verse, that Job speaks only of the immortality of the soul (the entire string of rationalist commentators rebel even against that), of a vindication by his ever living Goel in the next world, of his soul without the flesh, clothed in a spiritual and heavenly body (not his flesh). This entire notion, though held by prominent and churchly men, goes down into the dust, pulverized by the brief phrase: "on the dust." Why should this ever living Goel appear here on earth thus to vindicate Job — here "on the dust" where the dead turn to dust — and why should he wait and be the Last One and do this vindicating when all men are through with life? No one has ever answered; the commentators who hold this wrong view are suspiciously silent. There is no answer. For if this vindication is for Job's disembodied soul only, and in the world of spirits only, as these men claim, it would be senseless to say that it takes place "on the dust," or that it should be delayed till the end of time. It would take place at once after Job's death, and in heaven alone, not on earth at all.

Job now makes his confession and hope still clearer: **And though after my skin worms destroy this body, etc.**, a translation that must be called interpretative — note the three inserted words printed in Italics. The Hebrew reads simply: "And after my

skin thus made ragged." 'Achar cannot be the conjunction to read: "And after my skin is made ragged thus," because conjunctions in Hebrew are followed by the verbs in the sentences; it has to be the preposition: "after my skin," after the loss of it. The phrase is a reference to his death. Job suffered from elephantiasis, the so-called black leprosy, of which Kitto writes: "The black leprosy . . . is by some supposed to have received the current medical name 'elephantiasis' . . . on account of its rendering the skin like that of the elephant, scabrous and dark-colored, and furrowed all over with tubercles." In the progress of the disease the skin became fissured, deeply rent and broken up, finally falling away. *Niqq'phu* is the piel from *naqaph*, which for our passage Koenig renders *absetzen*, make tattered or ragged. It is construed as a relative clause: "which is made ragged." The plural form: "they made ragged," is like other cases where the plural is used for the indefinite, it is impersonal like the German *man*, usually rendered in English by the passive: "is made," or "has been made." The addition of *zo'th*, **this**, a feminine form used also for the neuter, cannot belong to 'ori, "my skin," which is masculine. The R. V. makes it the object of the verb, supplying "body": "this body is destroyed" (for the Hebrew: "they have destroyed this, i. e. body); and the Jewish version does the same, but leaves out "body." We cannot make the lone *zo'th*, mean: "this shall be," *hoc erit*, for then *zo'th* would have to head the sentence. The only solution is to make the word adverbial: "in this manner," or "thus" as ye see. Some think that Job when he spoke said "this" and pointed to his body; wherefore also they feel free to supply the word "body" like the R. V. The entire line reflects Job's deep feeling in speaking of his approaching dissolution, his poor body already showing the terrible signs of going to pieces. All the rationalistic commentators read this line, like the next, of

Job's wasting away to a pitiful skeleton; and that he thought he would have to reach this lowest depth (yet without dying) before God would intervene in his case (as God then also did, they assert). This view has already been shown as impossible. The insertion of "worms" in the A. V. makes the destruction of Job's body that of maggots after death in the grave, while Job spoke only of the destruction by the disease itself.*

One of the greatest exegetical battle-fields in the entire Bible is the second line in v. 26: **yet in my flesh shall I see God.** We are glad to dismiss as altogether negligible the entire host of commentators who have been rightly called "the skeptical or hyper-critical rationalists," who followed ideas of Chrysostom and other ancients and the Jewish exegetes of the Middle Ages, and headed by Eichhorn gained quite an ascendancy for a time, with even von Hofmann among them, also a lot of Englishmen, and here and there a lone, lost orthodox theologian. These men read the reference to Job's flesh as meaning his complete emaciation, God then appearing for his vindication. One of their latest representatives, Volk, arrives at this meaning: Job "hopes to see God, even though his skin be utterly shattered and by the power of the disease he be reduced to a skeleton"; he hopes to see God "this side of death." — The debate centers on *mibb'sari*, in particular on the preposition *min* in this phrase. The R. V., followed by the Jewish, translates:

* Here we must take note of the marginal rendering in the A. V.: "After I shall awake though this (body) be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God." This makes *'achar* a conjunction, and rightly so, because it reads a verb immediately following. That verb is *'ori* derived from *'ur*, "to be stirred up," "to awake." But although this is the closer rendering which the A. V. offers, not a single commentator as much as even mentions it. The reason seems to be that *'ori* cannot be read as a verb "I shall awake," because it cannot be a form derived from *'ur*; but must be read as a noun: "my skin."

"without my flesh." *Min* is read as "privative," Delitzsch calls it "negative": rid of my flesh. The more conservative commentators thus arrive at this meaning: Job is speaking of "his condition after departing from this earth, a condition which, of not absolutely incorporeal, is at least one of freedom from the body. It refers to the time when, freed from his suffering, miserable, decayed $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\acute{\iota}\varsigma$, he shall behold God as a glorified spirit." These men read "without my flesh" as parallel and equivalent to "after my skin" (i. e. after it is gone). They specify, more particularly, that Job is confessing his faith only in *the immortality of the soul*, and not yet in *the resurrection of the body*. Some, like Reu, stop short with Job's disembodied soul raised to the other world, and the *visio Dei*; others like Delitzsch note the mention of "eyes" in v. 27, and think that Job must have imagined some kind of spiritual, ethereal body for his departed spirit in its vision of God. They think that this notion of a spiritual body brings Job somewhat close to the idea of a bodily resurrection, which also seems to satisfy their biblical consciences considerably. Yet we are positively told that Job did not mean the resurrection of his body from death. We grow suspicious when this view is bolstered up with assertions like this, that the doctrine of the resurrection was not known, at least as a formulated thing, until the time of Solomon; that the souls of all were supposed to descend at death into Sheol or the dark kingdom of the dead; that Job here only momentarily and for his own person breaks through this depressing belief with his hope of seeing God after his own death. When men hold such ideas about the age of Job and those old saints we cannot help but suspect that their exegesis is controlled by these ideas; that instead of revising and clarifying their own views on these matters by means of passages like this one from Job, they do the reverse, namely

reduce Job's words to the low level of their own notions.

Right here let us get rid of this figment of some sort of a body, call it spiritual, ethereal, or what you please, which the soul is said to receive at death. Compare the author's exposition of 2 Cor. 5, 1 etc., in *The Eisenach Epistle Selections*, vol. I, p. 129 etc., the passage where this unbiblical and really theosophical notion usually is brought in as if it were the teaching of St. Paul. It is speculation pure and simple, and when consistently thought out postulates some sort of rarified bodies even for the angels, and finally also something like bodily form for God himself. A classic expression for it is Oetinger's dictum: "Corporeity is the goal of all God's ways." No; heaven has no great clothes-closet in which are hung a vast lot of "transformation bodies" awaiting our arrival after death, when such a "body" is handed out to our "naked" soul for us to put on and thus be clothed until the day of resurrection. It is fairly ludicrous to attribute this late theosophical speculation to ancient Job as a decoration for his sure hope of seeing God after his death. Not with such "transformation" eyes did he think to see God.

The more conservative exegetes center their finding on two points: 1) *min* must mean "without," free from the flesh, rid of it; 2) "without my flesh" has the same general sense as "after my skin," since skin and flesh belong together, as also they are used together in v. 20. Hence they claim with apodictic assurance: Job here confesses only his immortality, not at all his bodily resurrection. — What is this exegesis worth? What is it worth exegetically and linguistically? Let us take up the second point first. The two phrases are indeed parallel. But in saying that these exegetes slip in an assumption which we must at once challenge, namely that these two phrases mean skin and flesh, dead and buried, and thus separated from

the soul; that the phrases mean that and only that. This finding is not exegetical at all; it is the introduction of a false dogmatical assumption under the guise of exegesis. The trick by means of which this assumption is shoved across is the pressing of *min* to the extreme point, and then using *min* thus pressed beyond its bounds as giving to both phrases the sense desired, namely to make them read: with skin and flesh left completely and for ever behind shall I see God, i. e. with my soul only (either the soul by itself, or the soul covered with a supposed ethereal film-body). — Now if *min* is thus pressed, the exegetical context is completely smashed. What become of v. 25 b? Will not this seeing of God begin at once after skin and flesh are left behind in death? Why does Job say that his Redeemer must first rise up for him on the dust? On the dust means at least here on earth. In all Scripture there is mentioned only one appearance of the great Goel on the dust of earth, and that is at the last day when the dead shall arise. An exegesis that presses *min* so that *min* upsets a previous statement in the text needs no further refutation; it refutes itself. — But this pressing of *min* upsets the context which follows, as well as that which precedes. Job expects to see God, but emphatically adds: “and mine eyes shall behold.” He was speaking to his three comforters who were expected to understand him. Could he mean by this pointed word “mine eyes” other eyes than he at that time had, say “soul eyes”? They who care to may assume that; it will never amount to anything more than an assumption. — Hence we conclude: when these exegetes thus press *min* they overdo. Their finding does not accord with the words. Lange and Schaff see the force of the point about the eyes of Job, and evade this by seeking cover behind the spiritual film-body assumed by Delitzsch. This means to sell Job’s hope of the resurrection of the body for the price of a dose of theosophy. We refuse to make

any such sale. The thing is not helped when Job is said merely to long to be rid of his flesh or body, and when then Rom. 8, 23 and 1 Cor. 15, 50 are quoted in support; for neither passage supports this claim. St. Paul's "redemption of the body" includes its resurrection, and does not mean riddance of the body; and his "corruption" which cannot inherit "incorruption" likewise points to the resurrection, for we are positively told by St. Paul: "this corruptible must put on incorruption." Why falsify the New Testament just to get rid of Job's confession of the resurrection?

Stellhorn in his *Schriftbeweis des luth. Katechismus*, p. 278 etc. is afraid to challenge this undue pressing of *min* in the sense of "without" on the linguistic side, but he does repudiate it doctrinally, for his writes: "However one may understand the details, this much must be admitted, that Job here speaks of . . . his *death*, and in spite of that has the joyful hope that *his eyes* shall see God; and that presupposes the resurrection of the flesh." But really this position is untenable. It makes all the difference in the world how one understands the details, for they inevitably and in the end decide the doctrine.

The linguistic strangle-hold which these exegetes imagine they have in *min* for choking to death Job's assurance of the resurrection, is wholly fictitious. *Min* simply means "from" in all its variations. In his fine lexicon Koenig, the best living Hebrew scholar to-day, does not even list "without," Ger. *ohne*, among the meanings of *min*. In certain connections, where the context and the nature of the case justify it, one might use the English "without" in rendering *min*, but only as we use other handy terms and turns in English in trying to translate from other languages. An actual study of the uses of *min* will bring the surprising result that in the entire A. V. *min* is never translated "without"! Those translators never found a single case in the entire Old Testament in which *min*

could be advantageously rendered by "without." Many other words and expressions are rendered by "without," but never once the preposition *min*. It seems high time that some of these things become known, at least among scholars.—But more than this. We are emphatically told that *min* here must be "privative." But Koenig lists no "privative" uses of *min* at all! He could not; there are no privative meanings or uses. *Min* means "from" in its various shades of meaning, and sometimes "from" has the idea of separation, that is all. It never means "apart from," "separated or sundered from," but when it carries the idea of separation it generally means "going out from," "extending from," and the like. That is the real story of separative *min*. The commentators who hold to "without," especially the Germans, find it necessary in their translations and comments to use an adjective in place of *min*, as expressing more closely what they mean: namely "rid of the flesh," "free from," "bare of" and the like, which makes only the more apparent their violent maltreatment of little *min*.—In denoting "from" *min* actually often involves the closest kind of connection. Look at these examples: "He (God) had horns coming out of (*min*) his hand," Hab. 3, 4. Did these horns leave the hand? or was the hand "without" the horns? "And Jehiel," and a lot of other men, "were overseers under (*min*) the hand of Cononiah" etc.; margin: "at (*min*) the hand" etc., 2 Chron. 31, 13. No; they did not get away from, were not free and separate from Cononiah's hand or control. "And the undersettlers were of (*min*) the very base itself." 1 Kings 7, 34 b. They carried the base, hence were in rather close connection with it, certainly not away from it. "And on the top of the base the ledges thereof and the borders were of (*min*) the same," 1 Kgs. 7, 35 b. Now these are only samples of the use of *min*; and samples of the separative use. Illuminating, are they not? To finish

the job on this use of *min* take Gen. 49, 24: "and the arms of his hands were made strong by (*min*) the hands of the mighty God of Jacob"; Koenig says: "on the part of the hands," *von Seiten*, or "from his (*God's*) power." No "without" here. Job 5, 20: "redeem thee from (*min*) death . . . (margin) from the hands of the sword"; Ps. 140, 5: keep "from the hands of the wicked"; Ps. 141, 9: "from the snares." Koenig gives the sense of *min* here as: *aus der Gewalt*. This is the most separative use there is of *min*, and even here "without" is quite out of the question. This exhausts the list of sample uses for *min* under the group "from," except such as "from (*min*) the east," which we can pass by here as not pertinent.

Applying our results to *mibb^esari* the verdict must be: in this lone instance the translation "*without* my flesh" cannot stand. It is dictated not by genuine linguistic knowledge, but by false dogmatical preconceptions. It does not give Job's meaning, but a meaning these commentators impose on Job. Linguistically there is no duplicate for this "without." Hence we put this "without" where it belongs — without! — What Job really says is this: **from my flesh** shall I see God. Rupprecht and others render it: "from out my flesh." That is the whole story. At once it becomes clear why this seeing is dated for the time when the Goel as the Last One appears for vindication on the dust of earth; why Job properly speaks of this seeing with "mine eyes"; why he mentions his destroyed skin and his flesh so as to signify in these parallel phrases his early death. All these points combine in pointing to one thing, and one alone, namely *Job's resurrection from the dead*. Only by tampering with Job's words can any man eliminate the resurrection. And here, too, let us finish the job. The intimation by some that Job felt this certainty only for his own person is absurd. Voicing thus

clearly the resurrection hope for himself he voiced it for all the dead. When that great Goel shall stand as the Last One on the dust, to render the final verdict, he shall have before him not merely Job all alone, his skin and flesh renewed by the resurrection, but these miserable comforters of Job likewise, and all the dead raised again; and all of them shall hear Job's vindication. No wonder Job so dramatically cried to have his confession of the resurrection immortalized in an imperishable record.

As far as the translation **in my flesh** in our A. V. is concerned we may accept this as substantially correct, the more since the margin of the A. V. offers: "yet *out* of my flesh shall I see God." These old linguists, we must therefore say, properly understood *min*, as is evinced also by their translating it nowhere in the Old Testament by "without." It ought to be great satisfaction to know these facts.

All this exegetical study means that the Church of the past ages and of the present day is right in using Job's glorious words as voicing the resurrection faith. We may confidently go on reading Job's words as expressing our own faith, beside the open graves of saints; we may go on joyfully singing Louisa Henrietta von Brandenburg's grand hymn: *Jesus meine Zuversicht* ("Jesus, my Redeemer, lives"); Paul Gerhard's: *Ich weiss, dass mein Erloeser lebt*; we may comfort our souls with utmost assurance by the devotional use made of Job's words in all our Christian literature. On top of that we feel grateful to read: "A number even of able Orientalists and independent Hebrew scholars since the last century . . . think . . . that the passage must still be held to teach, at least in general, the Church doctrine of the resurrection" etc. The fact is, that in the face of all the rationalistic falsification and all the more conservative misinterpretation, both of which sought to eliminate the resurrection, the conviction among many great as

well as small scholars has never wavered that our passage does testify of the resurrection. We have purposely omitted the Vulgate and Luther in the discussion, partly in order to reduce space, and partly because these constitute a chapter somewhat apart.

Job reveals who his great Goel is: **I shall see God**, 'Eloha, the singular in place of 'Elohim. The commentators are so taken up with the flesh phrase that they ignore both this title as well as the *visio* of which Job speaks. Beyond question Job states here that his Goel is God himself. He says no more. Because he does not say any more many are quick to conclude that he knew no more. The principle of so many exegetes seems to be to reduce the knowledge of the Old Testament saints, and in particular also of the old patriarchs, to the lowest possible level; thus their knowledge of the resurrection, of the condition of the soul after death (all the folly of the exegetes on Sheol!), and of the persons of the Holy Trinity. This principle is false. The second person of the Godhead appeared to Abraham and spoke with him; that patriarch saw Christ's day and was glad. Abraham's knowledge descended to Job. Moses spoke with God face to face; so he knew independently. Legitimate exegesis will declare that Job inherited all this knowledge in regard to the Son of God. Note also how Job speaks of the Spirit of God in 26, 13; 27, 3; 33, 4. We must interpret 'Eloha in this sense, namely that Job knew of the second person of the Godhead, who as the seed of Abraham would stand at last in judgment on the earth. Job's Goel is the Son.— And now we must add this wonderful knowledge: Job would "see" this 'Eloha; he uses the poetic verb *chazah*, "to view," or behold. He repeats it in v. 27, and then adds the commoner verb *ra'ah*, "to see." We should feel the stress which Job lays on this seeing, inasmuch as he uses three verbs for it: **shall I see . . . I shall see . . . shall behold**. How Job

must have looked forward to the great day and moment! He would see his divine Vindicator, actually stand in his presence as now he stood in the presence of these his traducers. Ps. 17, 15; 1 Cor. 13, 12; 1 John 3, 2.

In v. 27: **Whom I shall see for myself**, is a repetition which as such emphasizes the seeing, but which adds the further emphasis: first by means of 'ani, the emphatic pronoun "I," and then by adding li, "for myself," which does not mean "I by myself," but "I myself for my benefit or advantage." What advantage that shall be we already know. — This personal seeing, already stressed, is now for the third time more fully stated: **and mine eyes shall behold** (here *ra'ah*, **and not another** (margin: "not a stranger"). We have already said enough on "mine eyes." Job means his actual eyes, the eyes with which he was looking at his auditors at the time. They shall close in death and turn to dust — and yet these very eyes, Job says, shall behold the great Goel. That means the resurrection, can mean nothing else. Observe that Job has a fine gradation here: 1) I shall see; 2) I ('ani) shall see (pronoun added to the verb); 3) *mine eyes* shall behold. It seems, he cannot make it clear enough that he does not mean the mere seeing of his soul. In order to take care of "mine eyes" in this climax Delitzsch and his following bring in the film-body of which we have already spoken. Barring out the resurrection nothing seems left but a resort to theosophy. Whoever thinks that is exegesis is mistaken. Lange even adds to the speculative notion, probably imagining that the thicker he puts it on, the more readily we will accept it: Job's condition "disembodied, freed from the earthly *basar*, is to be understood not as one of abstract incorporeality, or absolute spirituality; for this is a representation which is decidedly opposed to the concrete pneumatico-realistic mode of thought found in the Old Testament Scriptures which does not

even represent God as abstractly incorporeal." We repudiate the idea *in toto* as absolutely *contra Scripturam!*—**And not another** means: "and not a stranger." This modifies the subject: I, and not a stranger, shall behold 'Eloha. Job's vindication shall take place in Job's own presence, not before some stranger, with Job absent; not before somebody who would have little or no personal interest in the matter. *Zar* cannot mean "enemy," for it is so used only of one of an alien nation. The rationalists want "not another" construed as an accusative in apposition to an object understood: "mine eyes shall behold (him), and not as an enemy (like these hostile friends)." This breaks the line of thought, and puts a meaning into *zar* which is inadmissible, even when Gesenius offers it. The observation is correct: "When Job says: *I shall see him — my eyes shall behold him — and not a stranger — he is not so much intimating that they (the comforters) would be excluded, as denying that he himself would be excluded.*"

The inscription longed for has been fully stated. Now the longing expressed in v. 23-24 is once more allowed to voice itself: *though my veins be consumed within me.* Dillmann's comment is good: "These words indicate that what Job has just said before expresses something altogether extraordinary." *Cheq* is taken to mean the breast as the seat of ones wishes. While *kilyah* means kidney, by metonymy the plural denotes the place for the deepest inward feelings, as also these feelings themselves. So there is no incongruity in the Hebrew for connecting "my veins" with "my breast," as there would be most decidedly if we combined kidneys and breast in English. This Hebrew idiom is used very often in Scripture. It is only a question of finding a corresponding English idiom. The R. V. ventures: "my heart is consumed within me"; Kautzsch has the same in German; the Jews keep "veins." The verb *kalah* here means: "to

pine for longing," and is regularly employed in this connection. Job's earnest longing shall be fulfilled. God granted him far beyond his wish. Not only was his noble confession indited in something more enduring than stone, namely in the imperishable Inspired Record for all the ages to read; God appeared to Job at the close of his trial of faith, corrected his wrong thoughts, vindicated his own ways, and vindicated Job's faith by tremendous earthly blessings.— May every preacher who touches this text do it full justice!

SUGGESTIONS

The general sense of our text is that the godly man closes his earthly life with faith's glorious certainty of the resurrection of the body. It would, of course, be a bad homiletical mistake to bring into the sermon any of the exegetical discussion we have offered, or the false views of the rationalistic school of commentators, or the theosophical figments of Delitzsch and his following. The preacher must know all about these things in order to keep his own faith as regards our text sound and joyous; but that is enough.

Let us make our own

Job's Faith in the Resurrection of the Body.

- I. *The Truth of it.*—The living Redeemer—the standing of the Redeemer on the earth at the last day—skin and flesh turned to dust—yet from that flesh and with his eyes Job shall see the Redeemer.—The entire Bible seconds the truth of Job's great faith.
- II. *The strength of it.*—Job's pitiful, diseased body—all prospect of life gone—Job's: "I know!"—Job's mighty desire to have his confession of this faith immortalized—how that wish was fulfilled in Holy Writ.—Our faith should shine in the same strength.
- III. *The use he made of it.*—Against the injustice of men he placed this faith with what it would bring him from the Lord at the last day.—Against the

shadow of his own death he placed this glorious hope.—In all his terrible suffering he was upheld by this mighty comfort.

Ziethe's Easter sermon may adapt for this season of the year:

Godly Job's Great Resurrection Hope.

- I. The firm ground on which it rests.*
- II. The blessed goal to which it looks.*
- III. The mighty power, which brings it to pass.*

We do the same with Heydemann's outline, substituting the resurrection for Easter:

Job's Great Word on the Resurrection.

- I. Our certain resurrection faith.*
- II. Our joyful resurrection hope.*
- III. Our new resurrection life.*

We decline to use any of the outlines which omit mention of the resurrection as such, and use as themes only the great word of Job: "I know that my Redeemer lives," inserting in the outline that therefore we, too, shall live. They are products of the false exegesis which eliminates the real sense of Job's words. Against them all we place the true meaning of Job's faith in the living Redeemer:—Job's great wish, and its fulfillment on the pages of Holy Writ and in the hearts of all true believers. Let us put the record of it in our own hearts:

Job's Faith: "I Know that my Redeemer Liveth."

The faith means:

- I. Christ's return at the last day.*
- II. The resurrection of the dead from the dust.*
- III. The blessed vision of the Son in glory.*
- IV. The vindication of all true believers.*
- V. And thus the comfort of our souls in the face of trial and death.*

THE TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Psalm 126

How much this Psalm has endeared itself to the Church of the new covenant one does not realize until he has examined the hymns that contain portions of this Psalm or reproduce its beautiful thoughts. One authority lists ten of these hymns. The closing verses of the Psalm constitute a standard funeral text, and no one knows how many times they have been preached on, to say nothing of the times they have been quoted. No less than eight Old Testament pericope lines have arranged a place for this Psalm. Let these facts aid us in approaching this Psalm. It is intended on this late after-Trinity Sunday to voice for us *the Joy of Final Deliverance*.

A question of Hebrew tenses meets us on the threshold, important alike for the translation as well as the interpretation of the Psalm. Must we translate the first two verses like Luther with future tenses: "When the Lord *shall turn again* the captivity of Zion, we *shall be* like them that dream," etc.; or must we translate like the A. V.: "When the Lord *turned again* . . . we *were*" etc.? In other words, as regards the sense: was the deliverance of Zion all in the future, or had it in part already begun? The decision hangs on the verb *hayinu*. If this verb with its perfect tense is the main verb after *beshub*, the infinitive with *bē*, then we must read past tenses in v. 1-2. For then the two 'az clauses in v. 2 with their imperfect tenses must follow the time of *hayinu*, expressing only durative actions. We thus get the rendering of our English version. To make this two verses future, we must

read *hayinu* as merely parenthetical (as the Hebrew does occasionally), and we must read as the main clauses after *b^eshub* the two clauses headed by '*az*, literally thus: "In the Lord's turning again the captivity of Zion . . . then our mouth will be filled with laughter . . . : then will they say among the heathen" etc. Now it seems quite impossible to prove that *hayinu* is merely parenthetical, and not the main verb. So we abide by the general consensus that v. 1-2 in this Psalm recount past events.— On the designation: "A song of degrees," read the remarks on Ps. 122, The First Sunday after Epiphany. Yet the fifteen Psalms so designated do not carry out the step arrangement in all cases, and in our Psalm it is more in the thought than in any set terms that are repeated.

1. **When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion,**
we were like them that dream.
2. **Then was our mouth filled with laughter,**
and our tongue with singing:
then said they among the heathen,
The LORD hath done great things
for them.
3. **The LORD hath done great things for us:**
whereof we are glad.

Our English translators followed the LXX when they rendered the opening line in the form in which we have it in our Bibles: **When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion.** *Shibath* (for *shibah*) means a band or company that returns; instead of this LXX read *sh^ebuth*, which after the verb *shub* or *heshib* (to turn) was used for "to bring about a change," to bring on a new era, and by further mutation: "to return captivity," i. e. captives. Thus our translators gave us: "turned again the captivity of

Zion." The margin renders with exactness: "returned the returning of Zion," i. e. the returning exiles. This also imitates the cognate Hebrew terms: *shub* . . . *shibath*: returned the returning. The Lord in his covenant grace finally rescinded the exile of his people. The first caravans of the returning people had reached their homeland and had begun the work of restoration. Our Psalm is intended to express their feelings. They here tell us that when the actual order came through the grace of the Lord for their return, and when that order of the Babylonian king actually came to be carried out, they felt like people in a dream: **we were like them that dream**, *cholmim*, from *chalam*, "to dream." They could not realize that it was actually true, that they were released, on the way home, then actually at home and working to restore the ruins. It seemed to be too good to be true. They feared they might wake up suddenly and find that it was all merely a lovely dream.

The second verse, by means of 'az with the imperfect tense pictures what followed this first feeling: **Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.** Instead of the more abstract terms "joy" or "we rejoiced," the Psalmist uses the concrete expressions of this joy, namely happy laughter and jubilant singing. There is a quiet implication here; they found that after all they were not dreaming, but that all was literally true. And the imperfect tense implies that this joyful laughter and jubilant singing kept on. More and more happiness would give laughter and the singing a new impetus. — A second result is added by a parallel 'az with the imperfect: **then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.** The impression upon Israel is paralleled by the impression upon the heathen, the *goyim*. The feeling voiced by Israel has a corresponding feeling voiced by such Gentiles as heard the wonderful news. Even these Gentiles

realize that what has happened to Israel is from the Lord. Humanly speaking, the fate of Judah should have been the same as that of the northern kingdom, the ten tribes. These never came back from exile. And Judah was languishing already for seventy years. But now the great deliverance had begun. The hiphil of *gadal* with 'im means "to show greatness in regard to" somebody. This verb alone would have sufficed; but the infinitive 'asoth with l^e is added for intensification: hath magnified "to do" in regard to them. We may combine the effect of the two verbs, and instead of saying: "hath done great things" etc., we may say: "hath done extraordinary things," etc. The extraordinary things are, in part, the wonderful fulfillment of the ancient prophecies concerning this restoration of the Jews. It had been night for them — now suddenly the sun shone. — V. 3 combines what v. 2 presented side by side. Israel herself in her laughter and singing takes up the praise of the Gentiles and makes it her own. It is like an echo when the Psalmist adds: **The LORD hath done great things for us.** Both phrases are emphatic, first "for them," and now "for us." And certainly, the Israelites themselves should appreciate what even the Gentiles could appreciate. When God does great things for us he likes to hear this music of our appreciation and praise. The verb back of *s^emechim* (*sameach*) means "to be lifted up inwardly," thus "to be elated," rendered by our version: **we are glad**, which could be much stronger: "we are (people) highly elated." Delitzsch keeps the past tense to match the preceding: "we were" etc.

By way of applicatory exposition we quote the following from Daechsel: The captives of Zion are all the believing children of God who are under his grace and the discipline of his Spirit. Here already they are redeemed, for they are free from the guilt of sin, the curse of the law, and the power of Satan.

Yet, because they are still in the house of this tabernacle, they are still bound with so many bonds of weakness, tribulation, and vanity that they long for their complete redemption. This will eventually come for the individual in a preliminary way, when the Lord grants him a blessed end and takes him from this vale of tears to himself in heaven. It will come for the entire people of God in unspeakable fulness and glory, when he, the Redeemer, comes down from heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ are raised first, and after that they who are still on earth and in their bodies, and all together are carried away in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. Then will they be like them that dream. Yea, like them that dream and are in a transport of delight will we be even then, when a blessed death carries us out of this present evil world into another and better world, when the angels carry our soul homeward on Elijah's chariot into our true fatherland. Then it will rise to the everlasting hills, to which here below it ever lifted its eyes and from where its help came, to the royal city of him who is at once David's son and David's Lord. There it will enter with palms of victory in the right hand, all misery of time left behind, all the revealed glory now inviting. What will the soul then experience? Joy and bliss will seize its being with power and penetrate it with might; carried away by joy and bliss it will not know what has come over it. Wonders of God will open up before it, such as no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no man's heart has ever conceived; for here below we see only the least of his wonders. But the highest joy will be: the soul shall see God, the uncreated holy-holy-holy Light; and this will kindle in it an unspeakable joy and will pour through it an inexpressible bliss. All vanity, on the other hand, all plagues, all temporal misery, which here on earth seemed grown fast to

the soul's being, so that it never knew itself, save as a plagued soul, will be gone; for pain and sighing can never be where eternal pleasure and the peaceful Sabbath of God is. We will be still more like them that dream when the last great day comes and the Lord gathers his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Then we will not only have those again, and have them for ever and in glorified form and heavenly being, whom here in life we knew and loved and whose departing we at one time lamented and mourned so much; we will then also behold those who on through time belonged to the Lord by faith, and by whose word we ourselves were brought to faith — the holy patriarchs, the beloved prophets, and exalted apostles, the faithful martyrs and witnesses — the entire communion of saints will appear before our eyes, and will receive us into their midst, so that we may celebrate the marriage of the Lamb in friendly communion with them. Then will our mouth be filled with laughter and our tongue with singing. Here, amid the present uncouth and perverted generation, our mouth is often full of holy indignation, when we must tell Jacob his transgression and Israel his sins, and our tongue is full of lamentation, when there is no end of the burning and the rending, and the people with seeing eyes will not see and with hearing ears will not hear, but treasure up unto themselves the wrath of God for the day of wrath and revelation of his just judgment. But at that day the Lord will cast out all who would not obey him in faith, and will gather out of his kingdom all offense and cast it into the fiery furnace. Then will our mouth be filled with laughter; for then we will be they who triumph, who see their cause conquer and all their foes beneath their feet. Once, it was otherwise; once we were a small, hard pressed flock, the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things (1 Cor. 4, 13); but now the word is: The right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right

hand of the Lord hath gotten him the victory. And as our mouth is full of laughter, so our tongue is full of singing, full of singing for the Lord, who hath preserved our soul from death and our feet from slipping, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and has not repented him of his grace and calling toward us. Then will all those envy us who together with us received the same precious faith, but cast away the grace of God and did not account themselves worthy of everlasting life. These are the heathen, among whom they will say regarding us: The Lord hath done great things for them. Also they who now rage and speak so vainly, and set themselves and take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed, will on that day have an inkling how blessed they might have been, if only they had not broken the bands asunder with which the Savior wanted to bind them to his gentle yoke, and had not cast from them the cords of his love; they will at least grasp this much, what torture and pain they would have escaped, if they had let the Lord rescue them, and will call those blessed whom the Lord did actually save. But while the confession pressed of necessity from their lips: the Lord hath done great things for them! no longer helps the heathen, the blessed and those made perfect, the redeemed of the Lord will take that confession from their lips and make of it for themselves a song of praise to resound through heaven to all eternity: The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad! Oh, let him who still has time to consider the salvation of his soul, to avoid the hell beneath and to elect the way of life that leads above, let him not hesitate long, lest it be too late; let him depart from iniquity, from the broad way whereon many walk, and take the narrow way, and array themselves with those who have gone out from Babel and are on the road up to Jerusalem. They, the returned, who have come home, still pray in

the time of grace for him and include him in the petition contained in the fourth verse of our Psalm; for all who themselves have received the knowledge of salvation have no more fervent desire than that the Lord convert many and send many after them on the way of salvation. They who have remained back in Babel really also belong to us, the true children of Zion; they, too, were baptized in the name of Jesus and were purchased and won by his holy precious blood — this is the thought of the returned, who have come home, and would like to draw after them as many as will at all allow themselves to be drawn.

4. **Turn again our captivity, O LORD,
as the streams in the south.**
5. **They that sow in tears
shall reap in joy.**
6. **He that goeth forth and weepeth,
bearing precious seed,
shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
bringing his sheaves *with him*.**

The note of great joy in v. 1-3 turns in v. 4 to the note of sadness. Yet it is not the sadness of complaint or of anything that clashes with the note of joy. It is sadness indeed, but relieved in earnest prayer and in sweetest comfort. Not all the captives in Babylon came back to Palestine at once on the proclamation made by Cyrus; many at first remained behind. So also the effects of the exile in Palestine, and in particular in Jerusalem, were not removed all at once. This was a long, tedious task. Our Psalm puts us into this situation. The restoration of the exiles is only as yet partial, and the restoration of their land, city, and Temple also only begun. So while the return of the first companies was a wonderful thing and made those restored exiles feel as if they were moving in a dream; when they bethought them-

selves of all that yet remained to complete the restoration, they could not but lift up their hearts and voices in earnest prayer. Here the Psalmist puts this prayer in words: **Turn again our captivity, O LORD**, namely so as to complete the great and blessed work already begun. Here we have *sh^buth* with the verb *shub*, which some have tried to substitute in v. 1 for *shibath*, and which we have already discussed. The Lord is asked to show himself as the true covenant Lord by carrying out fully and completely the promise of deliverance from exile, 2 Chron. 36, 22; Jer. 25, 12-13; 29, 10; 33, 10-11 and 14. "Turn again our captivity" is equal to saying: "return again our captives," using the abstract "captivity" for the concrete "captives." — A simile is added: **as the streams in the south, negeb**, "dryness," used for the southern slopes of Palestine which were naturally dry, and by synecdoche for the southland generally. "The streams" are the river-courses, dried out during the hot summer season, but filling with water from the winter rains. Opinions differ as to the point of comparison. The verb *shubah* of the first line belongs also to the second line. Now if the first line is to be read: "Return again our captives," then "like the streams in the south" means: like these dried riverbeds fill again with water during the winter. So the exiles flowing back to Palestine will fill again its empty regions, and the devastated places will again be rebuilt. On the other hand, if the first line is made to read: "Convert our captivity," i. e. change it from captivity into liberty, then the added simile is read in the opposite way: empty Babylon of our people as thou emptyest the streams of the south by the summer drought. Since, however *shub* with *sh^buth* has the well established meaning "to return or lead back captives" (Koenig), the simile must be understood in the former way.

After the prayer follows the comfort: **They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.** The sense of

this figurative line is about that contained in Matth. 5, 4: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." This line does not contain the shallow statement, that the Jews who first returned to Palestine found a devastated and dry land, and thus did their first sowing of crops with tearful eyes, but in the end reaped a good harvest with much joy. We have no business here to drag in the drought mentioned by Haggai in 1, 9 etc., for this only beclouds the sense of the passage. Nor is there a so-called "historic basis" for this sowing and reaping in the hardships in general which the Jews at first encountered in restoring their cities and their country to prosperity, and in the success which in the end attended their efforts. The line is general, not particular of some one person or set of persons only. The sense is not: *Some* that sow in tears shall reap in joy; but: *All* that sow in tears shall reap in joy. That is how all our preachers have always preached on it; and they were perfectly correct. This extra load of "historic basis" piled on by the commentators, we must calmly cast overboard. The words of our Psalm are in the nature of a *mashal*, which always needs a secret key to unlock the meaning. For, of course, it is not at all self-evident, when we look at earthly works and doings, that they who begin discouraged and tearfully, in the face of what looks like sure failure, shall invariably succeed and celebrate their success with "jubilation," *rinnah* (not "singing" as the margin has it). Often enough they do fail, and the end is only more tears, and more bitter tears than the beginning. In one domain, however, this *mashal* is really true, and never fails to prove out: the tears at sowing produce jubilation at harvesting. The *mashal* itself as it stands presents only the riddle; the key or answer is left for the following lines.

This key in v. 6 is a double one. It is inserted in both lines of v. 5, first into the statement about sowing, secondly into the statement about reaping. For "they

that sow in tears" we now have: **He that goeth forth and weepeth**, giving us practically the same sense. There is only the added touch of the infinitive absolute: "He that steadily goes," goes again and again; lit.: "Going he goes and weeping." — Now the key is added: **bearing precious seed**, *meshek hazzara*, however, means "a stretch of seed," i. e. as much as is needed to cover one stretch of the sowing across the field, whence the interpretative translation in the margin: "seed basket," containing that quantity of seed. This key is intentionally incomplete. It withholds something which they who do not know anything about this sowing and this seed are not supposed to understand. Compare on the parable of the Sower by Jesus, Matth. 13, 11 etc. In this key the point is the bearing of the seed, as much as to say: the mystery about sowing with tears and reaping with joy lies in this seed and is understood when you know what this seed really is. It is, in other words, the one seed which, if a man bears it and sows it across the field of his life, though it be done all in tears and with weeping, is absolutely bound to produce a reaping with joy. — As a light is thus allowed to fall on the first line in the *meshal* of v. 5, so also on the second line. For "shall reap in joy" we now have: **shall doubtless come again with rejoicing** (*rinnah*, the same word as in v. 5, "joy"). Only here, as in the first couplet of v. 6, we have the added infinitive absolute again, rendered in our English version by the addition of "doubtless" to "shall come again." This shows how even in form the two couplets of v. 6 are built symmetrical. — Now the key for this couplet, parallel to and matching that of bearing the seed: **bringing his sheaves with him**. Note how *nose'* is repeated. This may easily be imitated in English: "bearing" the seed basket — "bearing" his sheaves. Here there is the same withholding of a full explanation as in the former couplet. In fact both key terms belong to-

gether as halves of a whole: bearing the seed basket — bearing the sheaves. It is typically Semitic. They who do not by their own experience know what bearing the seed is (in tears and with weeping) and what bearing the sheaves is expected to be in the great day of the final harvest, will not know, can not know, shall not know what it means to sow in tears and to reap in joy. As a significant finger was pointed to the sheaves, as much as to say: there lies the solution, and you who are entitled to know will now know without further explanation. — There is indeed a wonderful “seed”; if you “bear” that, then with heavenly certainty you shall harvest “sheaves” and shall finally come and “bear” them also. The first may be in tears, the second will be in joy. Hengstenberg might have put it more strongly when he said that the relation in nature (between seed and harvest) forms the basis for what v. 5-6 contain, yet that we cannot interpret these words of the relation of nature and then merely make an application from this relation of nature to that of the higher life. No; nature furnishes only the figure, that is all. V. 5-6 speak not of nature, but altogether of the kingdom of God. If in that kingdom you bear the seed, then you most certainly also shall bear the sheaves. Hengstenberg does not go beyond telling us that this seed etc. is *spiritual*; that is true, but it is not enough. Delitzsch writes: As by the sowing everything is to be understood which the individual contributes to the building of the kingdom of God, so by the sheaves is to be understood the beneficent fruit which grows therefrom, God granting an increase passing our petitions and our understanding.” The trouble with that is that there is no warrant in Scripture for making “seed” mean a man’s “contribution to the building of the kingdom of God”; the fact is that there are no such “contributions” on any man’s part in any way like unto seed. The sowing meant in our Psalm is “sowing unto the Spirit,” Gal. 6, 8.

The seed is the Word of God, Luke 8, 11. Passages like Is. 55, 10; 1 Pet. 1, 23; 1 John 3, 9 confirm us in the interpretation that in our Psalm the seed is the Word of God, and the sowing of it is the application and use of this Word in our lives. We read of sowing righteousness and reaping a sure reward, Prov. 11, 18; of sowing in righteousness and reaping mercy, Hos. 10, 12; contrasting with it a man's sowing iniquity and reaping vanity, Prov. 22, 8. But such sowing also very evidently includes the Word as the seed. The Word is put into our hands; *we* are to sow it in our hearts and lives. This is done by contrition, faith, and obedience; and in this sinful world always involves besides the grief of repentance, all kinds of tribulation, compare John 16, 20 and 22, which is also plain on the coming fruit of joy. According to this seed are the sheaves that we shall bear in the great harvest at the last day. They are salvation with all the blessings that are bound up in that term; for the Gospel is the power of salvation to every believer, Rom. 3, 16.

SUGGESTIONS

Deichert states the sermon contents of our text quite correctly when under the theme: "The Deliverance of Zion's Captives," he puts the three parts: "I. Who the captives of Zion now are; II. How they feel now already that they are redeemed; III. What a harvest of joy is to follow yonder." Of course, we would decline the division cast in the form of mere categories: who — how — what. This can be shed, and a useful outline constructed of the substance offered. Here is an attempt:

The Deliverance of Zion's Captives.

- I. *God's children delivered by faith.*
- II. *Happy in the Word despite tribulation.*
- III. *Filled with the hope of eternal blessedness.*

Outside of the theme, however, this outline shows no text color, for it utilizes none of the typical expressions or figures of the

text. When one reads the parts or hears them in a sermon he does not hear plain echoes out of the text. While a good sermon may be preached from such a plain interpretative set of parts, a better sermon would be achieved by capturing more of the text color. Let us try this:

When the Lord Turns Again the Captivity of Zion:

- I. Then we are like them that dream.*
- II. Then we shall say, "The Lord hath done great things for us."*
- III. Then we shall pray that he shall turn the captivity also of others.*
- IV. Then we shall go on sowing though we weep, knowing that we shall bring our sheaves with joy.*

Langsdorff has an outline a bit cumbersome in its German form, which, however, we can dress up for an English audience. Read the hymn: "When the Lord recalls the banished," by Samuel Gottlieb Buerde; also: "Zion stands with hills surrounded," by Thomas Kelly.

Zion's Captives and their Song of Deliverance.

- I. A song of praise — for the deliverance wrought.*
- II. A song of pleading — for the completion of the work.*
- III. A song of hope — for the harvest of joy after the sowing in tears.*

Luther's future tenses in v. 1-2, while not exact according to the Hebrew, may nevertheless be utilized in the sermon. For these verses, even with their past tenses in English, may be read of God's children returning to their heavenly home. When they enter the golden portals above they shall indeed be like them that dream, and their praise shall be: "The Lord hath done great things for us."

When We Shall Be Like Them That Dream

- I. Our captivity and our tears ended.*
- II. Our harvest with rejoicing begun.*

"The Lord Hath Done Great Things for Them."

- I. A glorious fact. II. A still more glorious promise.*

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Is. 35, 3-10

The last Sunday after Trinity is the Memorial Day of the Church, i. e. the day on which she remembers her sainted dead. She thinks of their blessed condition in heaven, strengthens her own faith, and by hope anticipates the joys to come. The Germans called this the *Totensonntag*, the Sunday of the Dead, not, however, of the dead in general, godly as well as ungodly, but of the former alone. While the American church has not introduced this day in the same fashion, the text set for the day with this purpose in mind is entirely acceptable to us for the last Sunday in the Church Year, and the special object connected with the day and the text may with great propriety be introduced among us also. The subject set forth is *Our Anticipation of the Hope Hereafter*.

For a proper appreciation of the text one should carefully study chapters 34-35, which are combined under the heading: "The Finale concerning the Judgment of the World as typified in Edom, and concerning the last Redemption of God's People." This heading already indicates the tremendousness of these two chapters. Individual prophecies concerning this or that nation are left behind, the historic present drops away, in an immediate manner we are placed at the end of time, and there is a New Testament clearness about the Great End of All Things. These two chapters are a prelude to the grand epic of the second half of Isaiah, chapters 40-66. For chapter 34 there is the briefer parallel in 63, 1-6; but both chapters are full of expressions and thoughts that run through the

second half of our book. We see here the Messianic kingdom reaching its final consummation, the Parousia of the Messiah in judgment and in final deliverance. Our two chapters, like chapters 24-27 are the grand prelude for the completer revelation in chapters 40-66, especially for the latter triad in these chapters. Our text constitutes the end of this second prelude, and depicts in a lucid and wonderful way the final fulfillment of the Messianic hope. Judgment precedes, but our text describes the blessedness of the deliverance.

The two opening verses are an admonition to strengthen our faith and hope in view of this great deliverance, which then is vividly pictured in Old Testament imagery:

3. **Strengthen ye the weak hands,
and confirm the feeble knees.**
4. **Say to them *that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not:*
behold, your God will come *with vengeance,*
even God with a recompense;
he will come and save you.**

With the golden prospect of everlasting blessedness before us, all discouragement ought to be overcome. Whether it be the hardships of life, the oppositions of an evil world, personal suffering or sorrow, the loss of our beloved ones through death, or the deepening shadow of our own approaching death: none of these should weaken our faith or dim our hope. — The prophet is addressing his own people. There is no intimation that he is calling only to certain leaders of the people to strengthen the weak, etc. There are two natural classes among the people, namely those who are strong in faith, knowledge, and hope, and those who are weak. The strong are to help

up the weak; and when the weak grow strong they are to help other weak ones in the same way. — **Strengthen ye the weak hands** puts the thing concretely. Instead of saying merely “the weak,” the prophet says “the weak hands.” The idea is highly expressive; for when one is discouraged spiritually and thinks it is no use to work on, then he drops his hands and ceases to strive, “to labor on,” to wield the victorious weapons of his spiritual warfare. An abstract expression would be good; this concrete expression is decidedly better. Preachers may learn from the prophet on this point. The verb *chazaq* in the piel, which we have here, means “to make firm,” and thus “to strengthen.” Let us work and battle with firm hands. The adjective *raphah* really means “limp,” the limpness in this connection being a sign of discouragement. So the sense is: Let no believer be discouraged; if any are, hearten them again. — The parallel line has the same general sense: **and confirm the feeble knees**, the piel of *'amats*: “make robust.” *Kashal* is “to waver or stumble,” here *kosheloth* of the knees which totter or stumble from feebleness. As the hands are limp, so the knees are feebly tottering, unable to walk or run courageously forward. The hands and knees are mentioned because the spiritual life manifests itself in their activity, working and walking in the activities of that life. The two Hebrew lines are arranged chiastically: “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and the feeble knees confirm.”

But back of the hands and the knees is the heart, the real seat of the discouragement: **Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not.** In other words, drive the discouragement out of its inner seat. *Mahar* means “to be hasty”; the niphal participle with *leb*, “heart”: they that are hasty of heart,” who form their judgments too hastily, without considering enough; hence they who are easily upset or startled. We thus see how they become “fearful.”

The Hebrew gives us the very idea we need for preaching purposes. Our people often conclude hastily when something untoward strikes them, or they are hit hard by trials and difficulties; they think there is no use; the hands of their faith, the knees of their trust grow limp and feeble, they are ready to stop. If only they would consider more carefully, their hearts would not be upset, but hold steady and true. — Hearts like this need first of all a courageous call to brace them up: **Be strong, fear not!** The first verb is the same as in the first line, *chazaq*: “be firm,” Luther: *seid getrost*, “be of good comfort.” To the positive the negative is added: “fear not.” Where there is no reason to fear there is every reason to be of good comfort. — It is one thing to call thus to the discouraged not to fear, but to hold firm; it is another thing to convince them that his call is fully justified. So at once the fullest possible justification follows: **behold, your God will come, with vengeance, even God with a recompense;** that is the first great fact, and thus assurance. The statement is perfectly plain, also in our translation; only, the Hebrew construction is in dispute. Some translate: “Behold, your God! vengeance cometh, and a recompense of God.” Delitzsch construes: “your God as vengeance” (apposition), “and as God-recompense” (another apposition). We accept the striking appositions as substitutes for purpose clauses, but we also note the chiasm in placing *'Elohekem* and *'Elohim*, the one first and the second last, which looks as if the latter is also an apposition, being repeated for emphasis: “Behold, your God as vengeance cometh, as recompense — God.” Noteworthy indeed, hence the exclamation: “Behold!” Just look at your God coming at that great day, and new courage will enter your heart. The simple apposition: “Your God as vengeance,” is far stronger than a clause would be: “in order to execute vengeance.” *Naqam*, “vengeance,” used of God is strongly anthropopathic, speaking of

God as experiencing the feeling of men. But like all these expressions in the Scriptures vengeance is a human way of expressing the just punishment which God must visit upon the wicked. Since God thus in the end deals with all who now oppose our faith and godliness in his Church, we should stand firm and not let any hasty conclusion dishearten us. — The second apposition *g^emul*, “recompense,” really means “finish,” or conclusion, when a thing is brought to completion, or to an end; then in a specific sense: bringing to a finish a reckoning with somebody, and thus “recompense” or retribution. At both ends of this statement we have *'Elohim* pointing to the infinite power of God, as absolutely certifying to us that this vengeance and retribution will be carried out. — Now this is the one side, from our standpoint we may call it the negative side. To restore to the weak and tottering the full strength of faith more is needed. It is well to have this full assurance about the wicked who plague us; it is far more to hear: **he will come to save you**, *yasha'*, “to rescue,” to get one out of a pinch, *yosha-akem*, the jussiv with the suffix, to express that there is an intention. With *'Elohim* emphatically repeated as back of that intention, there, of course, cannot be any question about its complete and infallible execution. This is the final saving, the deliverance from all evil for which we pray in the Seventh Petition. So the reason is complete for all weak believers to be strong and fearless.

5. **Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.**
6. **Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart,
and the tongue of the dumb sing;
for in the wilderness shall waters break
out, and streams in the desert.**

7. **And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water:**
in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

Here is Isaiah's description of the blessed final salvation that awaits God's children. All their infirmities, which now in this imperfect world so sadly afflict them, will disappear; and the earth itself, now marred in so many ways by the results of sin that has entered in, will become again a garden of Paradise. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. — **The blind, the deaf, the lame, and the dumb** are mentioned here only as examples of the final redemption of the children of God. The question is debated whether these terms signify physical infirmities, or spiritual ailments, or whether perhaps they cover both. Dillmann, Marti, and Naegelsbach cannot content themselves with physical infirmities, while Delitzsch, Daechsel, and Faber are satisfied with this interpretation. There is no trace of any spiritual application of these terms in the text, and no reason outside of the text to deviate from the physical idea. If spiritual conditions were in any way meant we would expect one or the other verb or modifier to give us a hint; but there is none. Why should there be? one might ask. Is it not a glorious prospect to be forever free from all bodily deformities, hurts, and ills? Think what it will mean for men blind in this life to have eyes again — and such eyes! — to see all the glories of the new heaven and earth. And so with the other troubles mentioned: to hear the heavenly music, the conversation of angels and saints and the voice of God; to sing in the heavenly chorus with new tongues; to walk and leap in the fair fields where the flowers never fade, to go to the throne

and kneel in the Lord's presence. Who can measure the raptures of the redeemed at that day? All our diseases, pains, physical handicaps forever gone, a new body to match our heavenly environment and to enjoy it to the full — tongue cannot express the joy that then shall be. Note that here Isaiah really speaks of the resurrection of our bodies; for none of these physical infirmities now present in our bodies can be removed unless there is an actual bodily resurrection. Isaiah's words, too, recall the miracles of Jesus, which were minor anticipations of the far greater miracles he will work on all of us in restoring our bodies to heavenly perfection at last. — The verb *phaqach* means "to split," and then "to open"; it is used twice in v. 5 of both eyes and ears. 'Az in both v. 5 and 6 introduces the result of the saving mentioned at the end of v. 4. The simile of the "hart" is added in the case of the lame in order to indicate the nimbleness and the perfection of the restored limbs. Instead of saying prosaically: "the tongue of the dumb (shall) speak," we have the far finer statement: "shall sing," *ranan*, jubilate, or shout for joy.

The *ki* at the head of the second line in v. 6 distresses those who are not satisfied with physical restorations in the preceding lines; and no wonder, for how can a "for" be used to connect with spiritual restorations what Isaiah now promises concerning the beautifying of the land with verdure? It is all plain why *ki* should be the connective if in addition to the physical restoration of the bodies of the redeemed there is now the general promise of the restoration of the earth generally to Paradise-like conditions. To attempt to spiritualize or allegorize v. 6 b etc. simply results in uncontrolled fancies. **For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert,** means exactly what the words say: there shall be no more wilderness or desert on earth. The term *midbar*, "wilderness," means uncultivated ground,

left so as useless, while *'arabah*, "desert," is arid waste, and thus still stronger. Isaiah writes from the standpoint of an Israelite, but that does not make his meaning less clear. Water was the one requisite to turn these lands into beautiful gardens, hence the mention of "waters" and "streams" breaking out, *baqa'*, here the niph'al. — A third line is added in 7 a to the same effect: **And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.** Only, *sharab* means mirage, the peculiar effect of the haze at noon in the hot desert, which appears to the eyes of the traveler like distant waters, but is only the effect of the atmosphere. This shall become an actual pool, *'agam*, pond. Thus what was a mere delusion to the eye shall become a grateful reality. The second clause is similar, for *tsimma'on* is literally "thirsty land" all dried out and crying for water. This shall become "springs of water," flowing with an abundance of springs and brooks, and thus full of beautiful plant life. — Enough has thus been put on the canvas to give us a touch of the old garden of Eden into which the earth shall blossom out when the great day of redemption arrives. Only a few years we shall wander about here where sin has wrought so much havoc with nature; then shall come the heavenly change to a beauty and perfection which cannot be adequately conveyed to us now. — The last line of v. 7 has distressed the Hebraists not a little, so that Bickel, Cheyne, and Marti consider this line as nothing but loose fragments in the Hebrew with about all the main thought to supply. Well, it is hardly as bad as that. Our version has it: **in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes;** margin: "a court for reeds" etc. This is practically correct, except the "dragons," *thannim*, are jackals. Their habitation is where they roam. The addition: "where each lay," *ribtsah*, from *rebets*, "lair," with the feminine ending to indicate the lair of the female

where she has her young. This absolutely barren and wild land, given over completely to jackals, shall be utterly changed to a verdant growth of grass, reeds and rushes. We need hardly trouble about *chatsir*, which is simply "grass," followed by *l^e*, "with" reeds and rushes (*gome*, the papyrus reed). Some want *chatsir* as equivalent to *chatser*, an enclosure, whence also the margin has its translation: "court for (*l^e*) reeds and rushes." Koenig is correct: "grass in addition to reeds and rushes," i. e. grass on the uplands, reeds and rushes in the lowlands, thus a beautiful diversification. This completes the description of the new earth. Delitzsch is right: "In the final time of redemption nature will really share in the Doxa (glory) which passes upon the redeemed from God then revealed"; only Delitzsch, who is a flagrant chiliast, may mean this in a chiliastic sense, and then it would not be true.

- 8. And an highway shall be there, and a way,
and it shall be called The way of
holiness;
the unclean shall not pass over it; but it
shall be for those:
the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not
err therein.**

Maslul is "highway," a regularly constructed road easy to pass over. Now many read the sentence: **And an highway shall be there**, as if Isaiah had written: "And an highway *shall lead thither*," which, however, is not the case. Thus for instance Faber: "How should we get home through the wild waste of this life without a way or path? Now, he who in the highest sense is himself the way, the truth, and the life, has taken this worry from us. He has built the way of salvation and marked it out plainly in his Word." Then the *ordo salutis* is set forth as this "high-

way." Others first spiritualize v. 5-6, and then they construct a wonderful picture of exiles returning to Zion through a wilderness and desert that is transformed into a beautiful Paradise-like land. So they read v. 6 b-7 of the transformation of this wilderness; and then they add v. 8-9 as describing the wonderful road the Lord constructs through that wilderness for the exiles to return on; and v. 10 is then made to picture the exiles' arrival in Zion. But the moment one thinks of the realities that must be conceived as lying back of all this imagery and picture language, the result is either a jumble of fanciful notions, or a hazy indefiniteness, with neither of which Isaiah dare be charged. It is a simple historical fact, that the desert country between Babylon and Palestine was not altered in the least when the returning Jews went through it in returning from exile. It is equally a fact, if one would want to spiritualize v. 6 b-7, that the earthly land through which God's children now pass to their heavenly home, is in no way turned into a beautiful garden for their passage; it is the same rough, desert, sinful country it ever was. Now these are palpable, undeniable facts. So what could and did Isaiah mean? We get no answer from the commentators. Moreover, why should all the country turn Paradise just for the old Jews to pass through it on coming back from exile? Did it revert to desert conditions after they had gone through? The absurdity of that entire notion appears at once. Nor do we know a thing about the Lord constructing a fine solid road for the old Jews — they used such roads as existed, that is all. As regards God's people in the past and the present, traveling heavenward, we all know that God never beautified this world for them to pass through — if he had, they might prefer to settle down permanently right here, and never go on homeward at all. The only point with any basis in reality is this, that God has made a way for us to get to heaven,

which is the *ordo salutis*; but this is ruled out of Isaiah's description because the rest of his imagery does not accord with *this* road at all. So we leave all these fancies with their respective authors; we find it impossible to make them tally with Isaiah's own words.

In v. 5-6 a Isaiah pictures what the resurrection at the last day shall do in the restoration of our bodies; note the two "then." In v. 6 b-7 he pictures the restoration of the earth, using imagery from Eden. Now just as there are two "then" pointing to the last day and the time thereafter, so there are two **there, sham**, in v. 8 and 9. "There" means in this wonderful new earth turned from wilderness and desert into a lovely garden. "There" is where this **highway**, or prepared road, shall be, which is further defined as **a way, derek**, namely one that is traveled and in use. The picture Isaiah draws is of the Holy Land, of beloved Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, rich in water and verdure, a land of peace, beauty, and plenty, a land of utter delight. All that Canaan ever was the prophet idealizes to the highest degree. Now the center and crown of this land for Isaiah is Zion, the beloved City, the seat of the Lord God himself. It is lovely to dwell in this land, to eat and drink of its rich abundance, to taste its beauty and delights. But ever and anon, as once the old Israelites left their homes in Canaan and traveled to the Holy City to celebrate the great festivals, so in this idealized Canaan the children of God will go forth to gather at Zion. Then they shall not pick their way as best they may over hills and valleys clothed in beauty and loveliness; they shall find a wonderful road prepared, a way for travel, and in happy, singing bands they shall fare forth unto Zion. But while thus the prophet uses as the basis of his picture his beloved Canaan, this Canaan at the last day shall not be merely one little country in a corner of Asia; it shall then comprise the whole earth, made into "a new earth" and a

grander Canaan by the universal restoration of the Lord. — That is why the way in it leading up to Zion **shall be called The way of holiness.** Most emphatically this is not the *ordo salutis* which we now travel by repentance, faith, and obedience; for this *ordo* is for poor sinners in a sinful world, designed for us to reach Israel's Canaan at last. This *ordo* leads through the wilderness of this world; it is still beset with many dangers, and not all who get upon this way reach the goal at last. It is the way, too, "of salvation," of rescue and deliverance, which is a different thing entirely from that other way designated by the genitive "of holiness." To confound the two ruins all that Isaiah really says and substitutes ideas of our own. Moreover, how can we again think of walking the *ordo salutis* after our bodies have been raised from the dead and have been freed from all blemishes and ailments in that better world? — Why this "way" in the heavenly Canaan is called "The way of holiness" we are at once told: **the unclean shall not pass over it,** only the perfected saints of God who by his grace have entered the Canaan of the new earth. *Lah* uses the feminine, since *derek* is so used here. While *tame'* is used very frequently of levitical uncleanness, there is no ritual or levitical connotation here; hence Koenig also renders it "heathenish" for our passage. The context, however, contrasts the term "unclean" here with holiness," so that "unclean" must mean "unholy," stained with sin and guilt. In the Canaan to come there shall be no more sinners, Rev. 21, 8; 22, 15. Besides that holy way leading to Zion's City and the presence of God would not permit an unholy foot upon it. They that dwell in Canaan at last shall be fully restored to the image of God, which consists in righteousness, knowledge, and holiness. — The next words are a puzzle to most commentators, some even resorting to the desperate means of altering the Hebrew text. One thing is linguistically impossible and thus

rules out an entire group of translations. It is this that *derek*, "way," is referred to by the feminine *lah*, and therefore cannot in almost the same breath be referred to a second time by the masculine *hu'*. This rules out the A. V.: **but it shall be for those.** *Hu'* cannot mean "it," i. e. way. So also Orelli and Delitzsch: "And it shall be destined for them"; Marti: "It belongs to his people." The margin of the A. V. is far better: "for he (the Lord) shall be with them." But this leaves the rest of the line doubtful: **the wayfaring men, holek derek** (singular in Hebrew!), **though fools, shall not err therein.** There would be an incongruity between *holek derek* (sing.): "the wayfaring man," i. e. one who goes a way; and *'evilim* (plural): "though fools." The matter is cleared up when *hu'* is read of the Lord, and when *holek derek* is read at its predicate: "and he shall be with them, going the way, and even fools shall not err (therein)." The sense is thus quite plain: when the saints travel to Zion on this wonderful highway of holiness, the Lord himself shall travel the way with them, and not a single person shall err from the way. *Holek* as a participle can be predicative for *hu'*, and can at the same time have the object *derek*: "(he) going the way." The term "fools" (the sing. being *'evil*) means "fools" in the sense of unbelievers and wicked men only when specialized; in its natural broad sense it means any person who is *ratlos*, i. e. cannot himself tell what to do. Children and inexperienced persons are of this time. Here on earth, also in the *ordo salutis* where spiritually God is present, such simple souls may "err," *tha'ah*, make mistakes. In the heavenly Canaan nobody shall make any mistake in regard to what is holy and blessed and pleasing to the Lord. And now we see why this highway is call "The Way of Holiness"; not only because the Lord himself walks this way in company with the saints who also are cleansed perfectly, but because it leads through the

holy land and lovely, Paradise-like Canaan to Zion itself, the Holy Hill where the Lord is enthroned in holiness, Is. 6, 1-4. What sweet comfort for us all! Read on Zion, the Holy City, Rev. 21, 9 etc.

9. **No lion shall be there, nor *any* ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there:**
10. **And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.**

Some comicalities are met with even in sober exegetical writing. There are two here. They who imagine this highway as running from Babylon to Palestine through the intervening wilderness and desert, now made strangely fertile and garden-like, tell us that this highway is made so high that no lion or other beast could possibly crawl or leap up onto it to scare or bite any of the returning exiles. The moment a person visualizes such a high way, the absurdity of it must strike him. Are its sides perhaps to be built up of concrete or brick? But, after gravely telling us that this highway shall so be built up to keep lions off, we are just as gravely informed that there shall be no lions at all in that lovely garden country. That doubles the comicality!—*Sam* used twice in this ninth verse must be identical with *sam* in v. 8. **No lion shall be there**, means in the new Canaan. **Nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there**, extends the thought to include any dangerous animal. As the earth shall be changed with its new beauty in plant life,

so also in its animal life. In various places Isaiah tells us how the nature of the wolf, lion, and serpent shall be so changed that these now dangerous creatures will be gentle and kind, as once they were in Paradise. — **But the redeemed shall walk there**, or better: “thus shall walk, or fare, the redeemed,” i. e. in perfect safety. The touch about the change in the animal world is needed to complete the picture of the rejuvenated and Eden-like earth.

And now the mention of the highway is explained: **And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion.** “The redeemed” in v. 9 are the same as “the ransomed of the Lord”; the former term describes them as freed by their Goel, the latter as bought free by the Lord. Only, both terms in the connection here used signify a redemption and release all complete in its results. The redeemed and ransomed here are those who have actually entered the heavenly Canaan. Most commentators allow us to guess what going up to Zion here means; or like Barnes, they misunderstand and mix up the whole imagery. This man, for instance, makes the highway mean “the path that leads to life.” He boldly tells us that there is no cause for alarm on this path. He admits — in glaring contradiction to Isaiah — that “there are many foes, fitly represented by lions and wild beasts, lying about the way, yet no one is permitted to go up thereon.” Isaiah says, no such beasts are to be found “there,” in the whole heavenly Canaan; here on this sinful earth we often meet the roaring lion seeking to devour us. Barnes goes on with the mixture: “The church should not be entered except by those who have evidence that they are redeemed. None should make a profession of religion who have no evidence that they belong to the redeemed, and who are not disposed to walk in the way of holiness.” Yes: “should not” — but now if they do? And they do in fact! **Zion** in this mixture would be heaven, which it is not. All

these redeemed are already in the heavenly Canaan. They have, however, something to do there besides looking at the blooming heavenly fields, the purling streams, the ever radiant skies. They must go up to "Zion," the Holy Hill," to worship and adore their Savior. Isaiah uses the old covenant picture of Israel going to the great festivals at the Temple. So shall the redeemed gather about the Lord in heavenly worship. What Zion and the Temple foreshadowed in days long gone by shall then be fulfilled with heavenly perfection. No need of Barnes saying "should not" — there will not be one unclean person in all the heavenly throng — how could there be? — Through those blissful fields, on the Lord's own way, they shall come **with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads**. The Hebrew *rinnah* is singular: "with jubilation" on their lips. As the pilgrims of old, going up to Jerusalem, sang Psalms, so shall these heavenly wayfarers to the heavenly Zion. One would expect: joy in their hearts; but Isaiah reads: "everlasting joy upon their heads" like so many crowns. Note *'olam*, "everlasting," which plainly shows that these pilgrims are in the new earth, where joy never fades. — This description of their joy is amplified: **they shall obtain joy and gladness**. *Simchath* and *simchah* should be translated alike: "joy"; and *sason* is "rejoicing" (over something). *Nasag*, used only in the hiphil, means "to obtain." They already have both rejoicing and joy, yet the nearer they come to Zion, and now when they reach its holy height, and stand in the very presence of their Savior, they shall receive still more of both. — The negative emphasizes the positive. Here sorrow and its consequence, sighing, ever and again drives what joy we obtain away from us again. There the reverse shall prove true: **and sorrow and sighing shall flee away**, and thus never even for an instant cause a shadow to fall on our heavenly happiness. Koenig translates *nasu*, from *nus*, by *verstummen*, "come to

silence"; and indeed when both are gone there shall a great silence of the vast threnody of wailing and sighing that has spread over the earth since Adam's first disobedience. *Yagon* is the Ger. *Kummer*, inner distress; to which is added, in order to express this distress outwardly, '*anachah*, "sighing," a sigh. No need to add weeping or other violent signs of pain, like shrieking, etc. Even the slightest touch of pain shall be far, far away.

"Jerusalem the golden!
 With milk and honey blest,
 Beneath thy contemplation
 Sink heart and voice opprest.
 I know not, Oh I know not
 What joys await us there,
 What radiancy of glory,
 What bliss beyond compare."

SUGGESTIONS.

The end of the Church Year—the end of your life and mine—the end of time itself. For the godly man there can be no more delightful prospect. Then will set in

The Change Eternal.

- I. *We will be changed*, v. 5-6.
- II. *This old earth will be changed*, v. 6-7.
- III. *Our highest occupation will be changed*, v. 8-10.

"Strengthen Ye the Weak Hands, And Confirm the Feeble Knees!"

- I. "*Behold, your God will come*," etc.
- II. "*The eyes of the blind shall be opened*," etc.
- III. "*In the wilderness waters shall break out*," etc.
- IV. "*The ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion*," etc.

When God shall come at the last day, he shall bring with him vengeance for the godless, recompense for the godly. To be relieved of the godless will indeed be great relief, and their fate

is certain. Warning. But it is the recompense that interests us most, for that shall be ours, if indeed we be godly. On this recompense Isaiah accordingly dwells at length.

Our God shall Come with his Recompense.

It transcends our imagination, but it shall embrace these unspeakable blessings:

- I. *Our resurrection and glorious transformation.*
- II. *The whole earth a heavenly Canaan.*
- III. *The ransomed of the Lord gathered at Zion.*
- IV. *All this told us now for our great comfort.*

Paradise Regained.

Milton's two grand epics: "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained." We now live in the era of Paradise lost. Our text pictures Paradise actually regained for the ransomed of the Lord. Yet Isaiah brings in much more, not only what lies in Paradise, but besides what lies in Canaan, in Mount Zion, and in Christ Crucified and Raised to Glory.

- I. *Christ Crucified and raised to glory.* Making us the redeemed of the Lord, who shall be raised with bodies gloriously transformed.
- II. *The new earth made again like Paradise of old,* a garden of loveliness, with every noxious beast transformed, and we to enjoy the new earth forever.
- III. *The promise of Canaan fulfilled, and Zion its crowning glory.* Only the redeemed dwelling there, and joyously going up to worship the Lord their Savior, as once Israel went up to Mount Zion of old.
- IV. *The glorious promise and prospect cheering us now.* Only a little while, a little holding out in faith, a little more strength for the conflicts and trials, and then Paradise lost shall be forgotten in Paradise blissfully regained.

REFORMATION

Psalm 46

“Ein’ feste Burg ist unser Gott” is the caption which Delitzsch gives this Psalm on the assumption that Luther’s Battle Hymn has this Psalm for its biblical basis. Luther himself writes: “We sing this Psalm to the praise of God, because God is with us, and powerfully and miraculously preserves and defends his church and the Word, against all fanatical spirits, against the gates of hell, against the implacable hatred of the devil, and against the assaults of the world, the flesh, and sin.” In hours of discouragement the great Reformer would cheerily say to his friend Melancthon: “Come, Philip, let us sing the Forty-Sixth Psalm!” In Bernhard Pick’s monograph “Luther’s Battle Song,” published for the Quadricentennial of the Reformation in 1917, we have the latest investigation on the time and occasion of the composition of this hymn. It was written in the evening hours of April 15, 1521, at Oppenheim, not far from Worms, when Luther was on his way to make his great defense before the Emperor at the Diet of Worms, and when his best friends had vainly tried to dissuade him from entering the city filled with his enemies, for fear he would share the fate of John Huss. Even the Elector, Luther’s patron, sent him warning. Luther answered his friends: “Though Huss was burned, the truth was not burned, and Christ still lives.” And from Oppenheim he sent to Spalatin the famous words: “I shall go to Worms, though there were as many devils there as tiles on the roofs.”

When was our Psalm written? One opinion is, in connection with the occurrence narrated in 2 Chron.

20, when God delivered Jehoshaphat from the Moabites and Ammonites. Ps. 47 and 48, as well as Ps. 83, are dated at the same period. The other opinion is, in the fourteenth year of king Heseekiah, when God delivered him from Sennacherib and the Assyrian host, 2 Kgs. 18, 13-19 and 36; Is. 36, 1-37, 36. The former opinion has the better historical basis, for instance 2 Chron. 20, 21 and 28, where singers and psalms are mentioned. The words: "A song upon Alamothe," is best understood as denoting tenor and soprano voices.

1. **God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.**
- 2: **Therefore will not we fear, though the
earth be removed,
and though the mountains be carried into
the midst of the sea.**
3. *Though the waters thereof roar and be
troubled,
though the mountains shake with the swell-
ing thereof. Selah.*

The plurals in these verses refer to the people of God singing as a body. Luther's hymn has the same mighty plural. **God is our refuge**, *machseh* or *machaseh*, in Luther's hymn: *ein' feste Burg*, "a safe stronghold." The term is figurative, making Elohim by a bold metaphor a mighty fortified castle where one may find refuge from the most numerous and powerful foes. The metaphor influences the next term: **and strength**, which hardly means "strength" for our hearts and arms, making us strong; but objectively, by way of putting an abstract term for a concrete object, here to match "stronghold," and thus: "bulwark" against which hostile forces vainly storm as Luther has it in his hymn: *ein gute Wehr und Waffen*, "a mighty shield and weapon." The Psalm announces

the tremendous fact which faith realizes, namely that Elohim, the God of omnipotence is our stronghold and bulwark. — The first line has two figures, which now the second line explains by stating the reality without figure, after the usual fashion of biblical allegory (Trench, *Parables*, p. 9): **a very present help in trouble**, lit.: “a help in anguish found so exceedingly,” *Tsarah* is stronger than “trouble,” it is the condition of anguish when one is hard pressed and knows no way out by his own ability; and *nimtsa’* is the niphal participle from *matsa’*, “to find,” hence “found” thus, and in the highest degree. The Psalmist is speaking experimentally, not theoretically. The great fact has been fully tried out and been found superlatively true. Luther like no man in his time, and like hardly another man since his time, had the conviction that the cause of the Word and the Church rested wholly on God alone. When noble knights (Ulrich von Hutten and others) offered him the protection of their swords he respectfully but firmly declined, and said that he would protect them, and that by means of the Word alone. Nor was this bluff on his part; it was the genuine expression of the trust and courage in his soul. Not that he was sure God would keep him alive; according to God’s will he might die like Huss, a martyr. That was all as God might decide, the whole matter depended absolutely on God alone. So not our armies and armaments, our fortifications and billions, our science and our valor are our reliance in the Church, but God alone.

First the great objective fact is laid down and acknowledged with joy, then the Lord’s people announce the great conclusion (*‘al-ken*) they draw from it: **Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof** — in other words,

though the earth be plunged again into chaos. Can one imagine a greater terror? To stand fearless amid it all, certainly means that no lesser thing shall scare us to scuttle like mice into some hole. "Though the earth be removed" really means: though it undergo a complete change, the specifications of this change then being added in the three following lines. *Mur* in the hiphil means "to suffer a transmutation." This change of the earth means a tremendous upheaval. First: "with (*b^e*) the mountains carried into the heart of the seas (oceans)." This means a reversal of what happened on the third day of creation, when God by his divine fiat separated the dry land from the waters, and made the mountains and land rise out of the waters and the waters flow down to the lower parts. The Hebrew has: "into the heart of the oceans," i. e. the very midst of the deeps; but *yammim* is not a numerical plural meaning different seas or oceans, but an amplifying plural, extending the idea of sea or oceans, hence in v. 3 may be with propriety referred to by singular suffixes: waters "thereof"; swelling "thereof." — The construction with *b^e* and the infinitive (*b^ehamir* and *b^emot*) in v. 2 is not continued in v. 3, where we have imperfect tenses. Translate: "when the earth is changed etc. . . . though the waters thereof roar," etc. making the imperfects concessive. The idea conveyed is that the hurling of the mountains into the oceans causes the ocean waters to roar, be troubled, the mountains to shake with the tidal waves — and though these terrific phenomena result we will not fear. *Hamah* means "to sound," and thus "to rage"; so here. *Chamar* = "to boil" or "to foam up." Our version is content with *ra'ash* in the sense of "to shake," while Luther has the better and stronger rendering *einfallen*, "to cave in." And *ga'avah* is "exaltation" and thus swelling" of the oceans. Vast tidal waves shall cause the mountains to shake and topple into the seas. The entire concep-

tion is tremendous. There is nothing allegorical about it; these are actual oceans and mountains, and are not here used as symbols of some other forces. Likewise the verbs describe what actually would take place if the mountains were to be tossed into the seas. How tiny would we appear if such terrestrial upheaval should break loose. Would we not die of terror? No; with God as our fortress and bulwark not a quaver of fear would touch our hearts. "Alps and Andes may tremble, but faith rests on a firmer basis," Spurgeon. No wonder this Psalm appealed to Luther. — This first part ends with **Selah**, "fortissimo," the direction for the singers of the Psalm to sing with greatest force — the thought expressed demands it.

4. *There is a river, the streams whereof shall
make glad the city of God,
the holy place of the tabernacles of the
most High.*
5. *God is in the midst of her; she shall not
be moved:
God shall help her, and that right early.*
6. *The heathen raged, the kingdoms were
moved:
he uttered his voice, the earth melted.*
7. *The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*

Some think that the refrain, v. 7 and v. 11 should likewise appear with the Selah at the end of v. 3, and even surmise that it has dropped out. But this is hardly possible. These commentators overlook that v. 1-3 needs no refrain verse at the end, because practically it has the refrain at the beginning. Compare v. 1 with verses 7 and 11 and you will see that the latter two repeat what v. 1 contains. So the

refrain is drawn from v. 1. and at the end of v. 3 Selah is enough. — The second portion of the Psalm depicts to us how Elohim is our fortress and bulwark, or rather how his protection and help operate to free us from all fear, and make us happy and glad. — There is little use to tamper with the satisfactory translation we have in our version of v. 4. Of course, we may read *nahar*, if we so desire, as a nominative absolute, without a verb: **A river — the streams whereof etc.**; but that is only a little more dramatic than our English: “There is a river, the streams whereof” etc. With v. 4 the imagery changes with suddenness — that is the fine poetic feature to note. We are all at once pointed to this wonderful river and the sacred place which it waters. The idea here used is from the garden of Eden, Gen. 2, 10: “And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.” So this river in our Psalm is divided into **streams**, instead of remaining one flowing mass of water. This reminder of Eden is intentional. It is to tell us that already here on earth the Church is a kind of garden of Eden set in the mist of the sinful world. There is no hint in the text that this “river” and its “streams” or divisions is meant to contrast with violent or raging streams elsewhere in this world. Let us dismiss this and other fancies attached to the river and streams. The river is pictured as dividing in streams in order to convey that it thus waters the entire city: **shall make glad the city of our God.** There is no doubt that this “city” is the Church on earth. That is established by the apposition: **the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.** *Q’dosh* is the construct of the adjective *qadosh*, here neuter and made a substantive: *Sanctum*, sanctuary, “the holy place.” But the entire expression goes together: “the sanctuary of the dwellings of the Highest.” The title *Elyon* when used alone and with-

out the article always means God and names him as The Most High, or as we would say The Highest, who is supreme over all. The City of God is here named The Sanctuary of the dwellings of the Highest. The entire City (Church on earth) is his Sanctuary where he dwells among men. And now we understand what is meant by the river and the streams that delight this City and Sanctuary on earth; they are the river and streams of his grace.

For just as in v. 1 the figures of the first line are explained by the realities in the second line, so here the figures of the river and the streams in v. 4 are explained by the actualities in v. 5. **God is in the midst of her**; she is called his "tabernacles" or dwellings, and thus he dwells in her midst. This always means grace for us, for we are sinners, and only by his grace can God be among us. Communion with God in the Church is by grace alone. — At once the effect and result of this dwelling among us by grace is added: **she shall not be moved**. We have just had this verb *mot* in v. 2. The Psalmist could say that the earth might be moved (removed); he could with propriety imagine that. But the Church shall never be moved. She may be only a little flock, and the mightiest forces may be arrayed against her, as certainly also they were during Luther's time, but she shall stand nevertheless. The gates of hell cannot prevail against her. It is a simple fact. So why should we worry and fear? — What has been said is already enough, yet there is more, for her grace is superabounding: **God shall help her**. So it is not her own might that keeps her: "With might of ours here nought is done, our loss were soon effected." Since God dwells in her midst, the help is always close at hand. But Elohim is sovereign in his might, and therefore it is he who plans and designs the help in accord with this wisdom, not with our low conceptions of what shape we think the help should assume. — **Right early** is a good

rendering of the Hebrew: "at the turning of the morning." Only one night of anguish, as Delitzsch puts it, and then with the dawning light the cheering help. *Phanah* means "to turn." — The perfect tenses in v. 6 cannot be conditional (Delitzsch): "when the heathen rage," etc., i. e. whenever a case like that occurs. These tenses simply state facts as they had occurred at that time. The Psalmist in v. 6 both individualizes by stating instances when the City of God needed help and actually received such help, and at the same time shows that our assurance of obtaining divine help in need rests on the facts that God did actually furnish such help in past days, and that thus he will continue in every such future case to do the same thing. **The heathen raged**, the same verb *hamah* as is used of the waters in v. 3 and there translated "roar." The idea is that the *goyim* with loud uproar assailed the City of God. The parallel statement intensifies the idea of attack: **the kingdoms were moved**, the same verb *mot* as in v. 2 *b^emot*: "the earth be removed." Koenig reads it of the dissolution of the kingdoms, in *Verfall geraten*. But this would necessitate that the preceding clause should be read in a similar sense: the heathen roared when God smote them. The true sense of *mot* here is that the kingdoms shook or were moved with rage against the City of God, cf. Ps. 2, 1 etc. The masses of the heathen and their organized kingdoms rose to do battle against the Church and by their power to annihilate it. — What happened? **He uttered his voice, the earth melted**. God in the midst of his Church did not need as much as to raise his hand, he only uttered a word with his voice; and not only were these enemies hurled back, the effect was even more tremendous, the very earth melted at the sound of his voice. "He uttered his voice" is lit.: "he gave" it forth. It is the voice of omnipotence, one word of which would be able to destroy the whole earth. Spurgeon gives a peculiar

turn to the clause: "the kingdoms were moved," namely drained of their forces, other territories devastated by the march against Jerusalem, so that crowns and thrones were rocked and empires fell, etc. But his ideas are turgid, as in so many other cases; for he mixes two things in trying to explain "were removed": the idea of attack against Jerusalem, and the idea of disintegration as regards the kingdoms. No; the disintegration begins only after the thunderous voice of omnipotence speaks; then **the earth melted** as if it were wax. This can hardly be literal in the present connection. Delitzsch makes it allegorical: their titanic rage grew cowardly, their leagues against Zion dissolved, and all their armed forces disintegrated. This seems to be the actual meaning. Note how the absence of connectives in v. 6 heightens the dramatic force of the four statements. Many weak believers, no doubt, were badly frightened at sight of the approaching heathen hosts, their very kingdoms stirred with rage against Zion. It was foolish fright — one word of God wrought their complete overthrow.

Now the refrain couplet is added like an outburst of jubilant praise: **The Lord of hosts is with us**, he who commands the very hosts of heaven itself, against whom no earthly force is able to stand. "With us" means "on our side," in the sense of v. 1: "a very present help in trouble." — This is repeated in a varied form: **the God of Jacob is our refuge**, he who was Jacob's God, and as such turned Esau's wrath from Jacob, and upheld his covenant with Jacob. This God is our God to-day and in the same way. The word "refuge" here is *misgab*, "a lofty place" which is a refuge because it cannot be assailed with success; in v. 1 the word was *machaseh*, "a stronghold." The two terms are plainly synonymous. Thus this refrain does not repeat the words of v. 1, but it does repeat the sense. And again **Selah** calls for the full power of the singers in rendering these lines.

8. **Come, behold the works of the LORD,
what desolations he hath made in the
earth.**
9. **He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of
the earth:
he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the
spear in sunder;
he burneth the chariot with fire.**
10. **Be still, and know that I *am* God;
I will be exalted among the heathen, I will
be exalted in the earth.**
11. **The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.**

Once more the scene shifts in this Psalm of victory and triumph. First (1-3) the great fact about God voiced by faith; secondly (4-8) the way this fact actually works out for the Church; thirdly (9-11) the astounding results of this fact as we and all men should contemplate and take them to heart. That is the structure of his wonderful hymn. — **Come, behold the works of the LORD**, is surely not addressed to the foes of the Church who may yet be alive; Delitzsch: “those outside of the congregation”; Schultz and Strack supply: “ye nations.” With *leku* (from *halak*, “to go”), “come,” the people of God bid each other come and see the results of the Lord’s astounding work. There is no hint in the entire last section that God’s people (or God himself) is thinking of influencing the heathen enemies of the Church. These great results are to be carefully viewed and contemplated in order to deepen conviction and strengthen faith. Let us not suppose, for instance, that because we know, believe, and on Reformation Day joyfully praise, therefore we need no further strengthening. Remember the young, who are just learning, and the weak in faith,

and even the stronger ones who are not nearly as strong as they should be. Let them all come! *Ch^zu*, "behold," is from *chazah*, "to view." The objects to be viewed are first expressed by a general term: "the works of the Lord," merely naming them from their great author, the covenant Lord. Some read '*Elohim*, probably because this is one of the *Elohim* Psalms; but the observation is correct that even such Psalms at times use *Yahveh*, as here. — But at once the closer specification is added: **what desolations he hath made in the earth!** *sam*, "hath made" or set, from *sum*. *Shammah*, here the plural intensifying the concept, may mean "desolations," as our version translates it. They who think the heathen are to come and behold the works of the Lord insist on this meaning; but we are free to use the metaphorical-psychological modification: exceeding terror or horror, or deeds causing horror. If we date our Psalm in 2 Chron. 20, we may take as an instance v. 24: "They looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped." They who prefer the later dating point to Is. 37, 36. The words of our Psalm, however, refer to any and all previous terrors wrought by the almighty hand of God in defense of his people. And as we read these lines, the call is for us to view aright all the deeds of terror which the hand of God has wrought upon his foes in past ages. There are the ruins of Assyria, Babylon, Petra, Bashan, Canaan, and many others. History is full of these evidences. They constitute one great visible line reaching on down through the past. There are other evidences of the Lord's help for his Holy City, such as rendering his enemies impotent as in Luther's time, allowing no hostile power to check the free course of the Gospel, making the very hostility of his enemies further the cause of the Church. Our Psalm, it seems, has grown out of a specific occasion when the Lord annihilated the enemies of the Church; hence the

triumphant results of his deliverance are pictured in terms of war.

V. 9 amplifies: **He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.** This does not mean by arbitration, leagues of nations, or any such methods, but by his almighty power in destroying hostile forces. *Mashbith* is the participle: "he that maketh to cease," the Lord, simply here describing him of whom we have just read that he has made those desolation-terrors. — How he ends wars is stated in detail: **he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire;** in other words, he destroys the armament of his enemies, after conquering them. Of course the singer mentions the weapons of war in use at this time. These chariots are of the scythe-bearing kind, long sharp knives projecting from the axles and beneath the body of the chariot, so that when driven through ranks of men many would be slashed to pieces. Delitzsch has the comment, that the example of victory causing the composition of the Psalm presages the abolition of all wars; though, since he is an outspoken chiliast, he may mean this abolition of the coming millennium as an era of peace for a thousand years. The words themselves mean the cessation of war in the final glorification of God's City and people.

Some who say nothing about the persons addressed in v. 9 think v. 10 at least is addressed to the heathen nations. But even here this is doubtful because of the second line. **Be still, harphu (rapha),** means: "let be," and fits quite well the people of God themselves. For in v. 10 God himself is the speaker, which is not the case in v. 8. He wants his own people to recognize fully his power and rule: **know that I am God, 'anoki,** "I myself," emphatic, none other. This is the realization we all need. Let us leave off troubling, worrying, doubting, questioning, seeking earthly helps for the church — God is God; he will protect and

keep his own. In times of disturbance in our own church it is well to recall this word spoken by God himself. — And since he is God indeed, the Almighty, he will reveal himself as such: **I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth — rum, “to be high.”** The *goyim* are always the enemies of the City of God. We have just seen them described as utterly crushed, and have heard what shall become of their armaments. There is no hint here about their conversion to God. God is thus exalted among them, and that all over the earth, by his destructive power laying them low and keeping safe his own. The notion of Delitzsch that God addresses the *goyim*, gives them a threatening admonition, and then dismisses them, is just a notion superimposed on v. 10, and not its real thought. V. 10 strengthens our faith, for it is addressed to us, by promising us God’s continued victories over his enemies all over the earth.

Very fittingly this divine assurance is followed by the jubilant refrain, voicing the fullest faith of God’s people:

**The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.**

Selah.

SUGGESTIONS.

It is probably a good thing that the historical victory from which our Psalm sprang cannot be determined beyond doubt, else some preachers would spend a lot of their sermon time on drawing a parallel between that old historical victory and the great Reformation victory of Luther. As our text meets us now, whatever we decide on as its immediate occasion, there is nothing left for us but to appropriate it directly, much as Luther has done in his great Battle Hymn. If historical evidence of God’s defense of his Church is needed in the sermon, any good and striking historical case may be used.

About as thin an outline as can be printed in a book is one offered by Kleinert: "Our Reformation Celebration: 1) A look back into the past; 2) A look around in the present; 3) A look forward into the future." One can change the word "Reformation" to some other festival name, and the outline will fit just as well. He also perpetrated this theme: "The Reformation Festival in the Light of Christmas." Remember these are offered to us preachers in a book! But what seems worse still, in his homiletical work on this glorious Reformation text, to which he appended eleven outlines, he has not one on the theme *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*, although Luther composed his hymn on the basis of this Psalm. What better introduction would one want than a clear and telling statement of this great fact? Only, as was very proper, the Reformer brought in Christ as the Valient One who fights for us, thus interpreting in the full New Testament light the Yahveh used in our text. Let this be our first theme:

"A Tower of Strength Our God is Still!"

Let these imperishable words voice

- I. *Our joyous confession*, v. 1.
- II. *Our fearless courage*, v. 2-3 and 6.
- III. *Our happy assurance*, v. 4-5.
- IV. *Our certain hope*, v. 8-10.
- V. *Our everlasting praise*, v. 7 and 11.

**The Lord of Hosts is With Us;
The God of Jacob is our Refuge**

- I. *The conviction with which Luther wrought the work of Reformation.*
- II. *The conviction with which we must maintain what Luther has wrought.*

**The Spirit of the Reformation,
As Luther Drew it from the 46th Psalm.**

- I. *Sure of God.*
- II. *Afraid of nothing.*
- III. *Happy in God's City.*
- IV. *Glorying in the Lord's name.*

The confidence with which the children of Israel were taught to sing in the face of the greatest dangers, voiced in our Psalm. With the same confidence we should sing today amid the dangers that threaten our Lutheran Zion. For from this same confidence Luther drew his faith, boldness, and courage, and by it succeeded in the great Reformation battle.

**The Luther Confidence which Won the
Reformation Victories.**

- I. *It sprang from the Word of God, from this very Psalm, the revelation it makes of God, God's Church, God's grace, God's help; and so from countless other Scripture revelations, which Luther believed and accepted as they read, and refused to change for the notions of men. — So our confidence must spring from the true Word.*
- II. *It was absolutely certain of God. Not with a self-made, presumptuous, and thus false certainty, but with a certainty from God himself; for God never forsakes his Word and them that cling to it. So Luther was certain of God as his refuge and strength, as his help and hope. — There is much false, presumptuous certainty, none of which is backed by the Word. We must be absolutely certain of God, as our God, our Savior, our Helper, and this we can be, absolutely, by holding to his Word. "The Word they shall let stand."*
- III. *It defied all the enemies of God and his Word, though they should tear up the whole world and turn it into chaos, though they raged and moved kingdoms against the City of God. God was with Luther and made him know it; his enemies had to fail. — The forces that still rage against God and his Word, some violent, some insidious. How helpless we seem! And yet we are to defy them all, and can defy them all, with the Lord's Word and help, and they shall all fail. Only let Luther's confidence make us bold.*
- IV. *It constantly glorified God, his power and grace, his help and support, his Word and Church, his blessed deliverance day by day; by worship and prayer, by sermon and song, by faith and life.*

In Luther our Psalm was made flesh and blood. — So let our confidence glorify, not our deeds, our work, our service, or anything in us; but the power, grace, Word, help of God, with every fiber of our soul. —

Such God-wrought confidence God will crown with new victories to the praise of his great name.

Soli Deo Gloria.

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