



# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

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Major Trends in Parable Interpretation

JACK DEAN KINGSBURY

The Sense of Church History in Representative  
Missouri Synod Theology

DAVID W. LOTZ

A Consideration of the Meaning of Prayer  
in the Life of Martin Luther

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Homiletics

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# HOMILETICS

## INTRODUCTION

With this article and sermon the year's homiletics series comes to an end. Pastor Ronald Starenko brings together two important aspects of the total ministry and in the process underscores again the importance of preaching.

This stress may provide impetus for planning next year's preaching. For the coming church year, God willing, the homiletics section of this journal will contain a brief sermon study and suggested outline for each Sunday based on the Gospel suggested in the A series of the new Roman Ordo.

The Roman Catholic Church has developed a new series of lessons in three cycles, listed as A, B, and C. For the past two years series B and C have been used in many Roman Catholic churches, and next year series A will be in use. Meanwhile the Inter-Lutheran Commission is working on a new proposal that will consider seriously the selections that have been made in the Roman Church. Interest in what the new selections are, and interest in what the new lectionary proposed for Lutheran use will contain, together with some concern as to the effect these changes will have on the traditional thrust of the church year's individual Sundays, should make this series worth following by many of the clergy.

The forthcoming homiletics series will approach the Ordo A Gospels as suggested preaching texts for use in the usual pattern of church year Sundays with the standard lessons utilized as propers. Some divergence will appear, since the Roman proposal operates with lessons designed for "The Season of the Year" in place of the Sundays after the Epiphany and instead of the pre-Lent Sundays. Since the Gospels for the three-year cycle have been selected principally from the Gospel According to St. Matthew in Ordo A, from St. Mark in Ordo B, and from St. Luke in Ordo C, another element of unity and continuity is being introduced.

In order to supply pastors with the listing of texts in advance of these studies' monthly appearance, the sequence of texts for Sundays and chief feasts is printed below.

GEORGE W. HOYER

### *Sunday Readings from the Lectionary for Mass*

#### SERIES A

For calendar Years Leaving a Remainder of 1 when Divided by 3 (1972, 1975, 1978, etc.)  
Beginning with Advent of the Preceding Calendar Year

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Reading I</i>	<i>Reading II</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
<b>ADVENT SEASON</b>			
Advent I, Nov. 28	Is. 2:1-5	Rom. 13:11-14	Matt. 24:37-44
Advent II, Dec. 5	Is. 11:1-10	Rom. 15:4-9	Matt. 3:1-12
Advent III, Dec. 12	Is. 35:1-6a, 10	James 5:7-10	Matt. 11:2-11
Advent IV, Dec. 19	Is. 7: 10-14	Rom. 1:1-7	Matt. 1:18-24
<b>CHRISTMAS SEASON</b>			
Christmas Vigil	Is. 62:1-5	Acts 13:16-17, 22-25	Matt. 1:1-25 or 1:18-25
Mass at Midnight	Is. 9:2-7	Titus 2:11-14	Luke 2:1-14
Mass at Dawn	Is. 62:11-12	Titus 3:4-7	Luke 2:15-20
Mass During Day	Is. 52:7-10	Heb. 1:1-6	John 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14
Sunday in the Octave of Christmas (Holy Family), Dec. 26	Sir. 3:2-6, 12-14	Col. 3:12-21	Matt. 2:13-15, 19-23

Octave of Christmas, Jan. 1 (Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God)	Num. 6:22-27	Gal. 4:4-7	Luke 2:16-21
Second Sunday after Christmas, Jan. 2	Sir. 24:1-2, 8-12	Eph. 1:3-6, 15-18	John 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14
Epiphany, Jan. 6 (or Sunday from Jan. 2 to 8 inclusive)	Is. 60:1-6	Eph. 3:2-3a, 5-6	Matt. 2:1-12

(Since the Second Sunday After Christmas falls on Jan. 2, 1972, that Sunday will be observed as Epiphany.)

Sunday after Epiphany (Baptism of the Lord), Jan. 9	Is. 42:1-4, 6-7	Acts 10:34-38	Matt. 3:13-17
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(The readings for the Sundays of the year begin on the Sunday following the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which is counted the First Sunday of the Year.)

Second Sunday of the Year, Jan. 16	Is. 49:3, 5-6	1 Cor. 1:1-3	John 1:29-34
Third Sunday of the Year, Jan. 23	Is. 9:1-4	1 Cor. 1:10-13, 17	Matt. 4:12-23 or 4:12-17
Fourth Sunday of the Year, Jan. 30	Zeph. 2:3; 3:12-13	1 Cor. 1:26-31	Matt. 5:1-12a
Fifth Sunday of the Year, Feb. 6	Is. 58: 7-10	1 Cor. 2:1-5	Matt. 5:13-16
Sixth Sunday of the Year Feb. 13	Sir. 15:15-20	1 Cor. 2:6-10	Matt. 5:17-37 or 5:20-22a, 27- 28, 33-34a, 37
Ash Wednesday	Joel 2:12-18	2 Cor. 5:20—6:2	Matt. 6:1-6, 16-18
First Sunday of Lent, Feb. 20	Gen. 2:7-9; 3:1-7	Rom. 5:12-19 or 5:12, 17-19	Matt. 4:1-11
Second Sunday of Lent, Feb. 27	Gen. 12:1-4a	2 Tim. 1:8b-10	Matt. 17:1-9
Third Sunday of Lent, March 5	Ex. 17:3-7	Rom. 5:1-2, 5-8	John 4:5-42 or 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42
Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 12	1 Sam. 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a	Eph. 5:8-14	John 9:1-41 or 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38
Fifth Sunday of Lent, March 19	Ezek. 37:12-14	Rom. 8:8-11	John 11:1-45 or 11:3-7, 17, 20- 27, 33b-45
Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday), March 26	The Procession with Palms: Is. 50:4-7	Matt. 21:1-11 Phil. 2:6-11	Matt. 26:14-27, 66 or 27:11-54

#### EASTER TRIDUUM and EASTER SEASON

Holy Thursday March 30, Chrism Mass	Is. 61:1-3a, 6a, 8b-9	Rev. 1:5-8	Luke 4:16-21
Mass of the Lord's Supper	Exod. 12:1-8, 11-14	1 Cor. 11:23-26	John 13:1-15
Good Friday, March 31	Is. 52:13—53:12	Heb. 4:14-16; 5:7-9	John 18:1—19:42
Easter Sunday, April 2	Acts 10:34a, 37-43	Col. 3:1-4	John 20:1-9
Second Sunday of Easter, April 9	Acts 2:42-47	1 Peter 1:3-9	John 20:19-31
Third Sunday of Easter, April 16	Acts 2:14, 22-28	1 Peter 1:17-21	Luke 24:13-35

Fourth Sunday of Easter, April 23	Acts 2:14a, 36-41	1 Peter 2:20b-25	John 10:1-10
Fifth Sunday of Easter, April 30	Acts 6:1-7	1 Peter 2:4-9	John 14:1-12
Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 7	Acts 8:5-8, 14-17	1 Peter 3:15-18	John 14:15-21
Ascension, May 11	Acts 1:1-11	Eph. 1:17-23	Matt. 28:16-20
Seventh Sunday of Easter, May 14	Acts 1:12-14	1 Peter 4:13-16	John 17:1-11a
Pentecost Sunday May 21	Acts 2:1-11	1 Cor. 12:3b-7, 12-13	John 20:19-23

## SOLEMNITIES OF THE LORD DURING THE SEASON OF THE YEAR

Trinity Sunday, May 28	Ex. 34:4b-6, 8-9	2 Cor. 13:11-13	John 3:16-18
Corpus Christi, June 4	Deut. 8:2-3, 14b-16a	1 Cor. 10:16-17	John 6:51-58

## SEASON OF THE YEAR

Tenth Sunday of the Year, June 11	Hos. 6:3-6	Rom. 4:18-25	Matt. 9:9-13
Eleventh Sunday of the Year, June 18	Ex. 19:2-6a	Rom. 5:6-11	Matt. 9:36—10:8
Twelfth Sunday of the Year, June 25	Jer. 20:10-13	Rom. 5:12-15	Matt. 10:26-33
Thirteenth Sunday of the Year, July 2	2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a	Rom. 6:3-4, 8-11	Matt. 10:37-42
Fourteenth Sunday of the Year, July 9	Zech. 9:9-10	Rom. 8:9, 11-13	Matt. 11:25-30
Fifteenth Sunday of the Year, July 16	Is. 55:10-11	Rom. 8:18-23	Matt. 13:1-23 or 13:1-9
Sixteenth Sunday of the Year, July 23	Wis. 12:13, 16-19	Rom. 8:26-27	Matt. 13:24-43 or 13:24-30
Seventeenth Sunday of the Year, July 30	1 Kings 3:5, 7-12	Rom. 8:28-30	Matt. 13:44-52 or 13:44-46
Transfiguration, Aug. 6	Dan. 7:9-10, 13-14	2 Peter 1:16-19	Matt. 17:1-9
Nineteenth Sunday of the Year, Aug. 13	1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a	Rom. 9:1-5	Matt. 14:22-33
Twentieth Sunday of the Year, Aug. 20	Is. 56:1, 6-7	Rom. 11:13-15, 29-32	Matt. 15:21-28
Twenty-first Sunday of the Year, Aug. 27	Is. 22:19-23	Rom. 11:33-36	Matt. 16:13-20
Twenty-second Sunday of the Year, Sept. 3	Jer. 20:7-9	Rom. 12:1-2	Matt. 16:21-27
Twenty-third Sunday of the Year, Sept. 10	Ezek. 33:7-9	Rom. 13:8-10	Matt. 22:15-20
Twenty-fourth Sunday of the Year, Sept. 17	Sir. 27:30—28:7	Rom. 14:7-9	Matt. 18:21-35
Twenty-fifth Sunday of the Year, Sept. 24	Is. 55:6-9	Phil. 1:20c-24, 27a	Matt. 20:1-16
Twenty-sixth Sunday of the Year, Oct. 1	Ezek. 18:25-28	Phil. 2:1-11 or 2:1-5	Matt. 21:28-32
Twenty-seventh Sunday of the Year, Oct. 8	Is. 5:1-7	Phil. 4:6-9	Matt. 21:33-43
Twenty-eighth Sunday of the Year, Oct. 15	Is. 25:6-10a	Phil. 4:12-14, 19-20	Matt. 22:1-14 or 22:1-10
Twenty-ninth Sunday of the Year, Oct. 22	Is. 45:1, 4-6	1 Thess. 1:1-5b	Matt. 22:15-21

Thirtieth Sunday of the Year, Oct. 29	Exod. 22:21-27	1 Thess. 1:5c-10	Matt. 22:34-40
Thirty-first Sunday of the Year, Nov. 5	Mal. 1:14b—2:2b, 8-10	1 Thess. 2:7-9, 13	Matt. 23:1-12
Thirty-second Sunday of the Year, Nov. 12	Wis. 6:12-16	1 Thess. 4:13-18 or 4:13-14	Matt. 25:1-13
Thirty-third Sunday of the Year, Nov. 19	Prov. 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31	1 Thess. 5:1-6	Matt. 25:14-30 or 25:14-15, 19-20
Thirty-fourth, or Last Sunday of the Year (Christ the King), Nov. 26	Ezek. 34:11-12, 15-17	1 Cor. 15:20-26, 28	Matt. 25:31-46

## *Preaching and Counseling*

Harry Emerson Fosdick was perhaps the last of the great preachers. There is, of course, a reputable preacher here and there, but pulpit giants are an extinct species.

Someone has suggested that, whatever the reason, several years ago people lost interest in preaching. Believing that no one was listening, preachers turned to other hobbies. Indeed, there can be no question about it, preaching has suffered a decline. For a time, in fact, Union Theological Seminary in New York City did not even offer a course in homiletics.

The liturgical movement provided compensation. If a pastor had a hard time in the pulpit, he could then concentrate on administering the sacramental life of the church. The pulpit pounder became the chancel prancer.

Such sarcasm is not fair, we have discovered. Perhaps there were pastors who became liturgical specialists because they could not function well as preachers. But some of us believe, in good Lutheran tradition, that sermon and sacrament belong together, that the one suffers without the other. Genuine liturgical renewal is not a retreat into new forms; it is simply a recognition that celebration is part of proclamation, that preaching loses something without the worshiping community.

The renewed emphasis on pastoral care and on the dynamics of nonverbal communi-

cation presents another alternative to preaching. The new model of the pastor is that of counselor rather than preacher. Many young men are entering the ministry not so much out of a desire to preach and to lead a congregation in celebrating the presence of Christ, but out of a desire to develop one-to-one relationships with people in their pastoral role as counselor.

While some young men have viewed the ministry as a valid and relevant calling today mainly because of the possibility of counseling, those who are already in the ministry constantly find themselves compelled to reckon with the challenge of a counseling ministry. In his book *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling*, Howard J. Clinebell Jr. remarks that people with problems seek clergymen more than psychiatrists for help. Ministers occupy a central and strategic role as counselors in our society. The pulpit pounder and chancel prancer has now become the therapy expert.<sup>1</sup>

But that off-handed assessment is not fair either. No doubt some pastors turn to the role of counselor in self-defense or in search of a viable ministry in the church. But some of us believe, in good Biblical and Lutheran tradition, that preaching and counseling belong together. Counseling is not necessarily

<sup>1</sup> (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), passim.

an option to be chosen in place of preaching, for there is something wrong with preaching that does not deal with human need, even as there is something wrong with pastoral counseling that does not communicate the Gospel of forgiveness.

Harry Emerson Fosdick, "the last of the great preachers," may also have been the last of the great counselors. Edmund Holt Linn, a Fosdick fan, comments indirectly on the master's method in his book *Preaching as Counseling*:

There is a close relationship between preaching and personal counseling. Each contributes to the other. A pastor who practices personal counseling with intelligence and insight discovers that his sermons are affected in both content and form. His hours in personal counseling give him some of the most essential elements of his sermons. It is likewise true that when a preacher speaks to the real condition of his people he soon discovers that he is being sought more and more by individuals who need to discuss their private personal problems. Although there may be excellent preachers who are poor counselors, and gratifying counselors who are indifferent preachers, it is difficult to see how one can preach effectively unless he also does some counseling. For counseling and preaching, the pulpit and the counseling room are incapable of being separated. One of the ultimate tests of the worth of a sermon is how many individuals want to see the minister alone. The process has now run full circle: Preaching originates in personal counseling; preaching is personal counseling on a group basis; personal counseling originates in preaching.<sup>2</sup>

It is a theological oversight to view the preaching-counseling process as the only circle in which preaching or counseling originates. It fails to take into account the circle of the church's life. Nevertheless it is undeniable that a minister who deals with people's real needs and struggles will be sensi-

tive in his approach to preaching. In like fashion, as he conveys a sympathetic understanding of human need and proclaims a power that creates faith and love in his hearers he will find himself ministering more and more to his people in a counseling situation.

Thomas Oden attempts to provide a theological base for the relationship between preaching and counseling. In his book *Kerygma and Counseling* he writes:

Counseling enriches preaching, since participating in the anguish, conflict, and perplexity of the parishioner enables the minister better to understand the depths of the human predicament. Furthermore, it is clear that since the Christian proclamation strengthens self-understanding, it also strengthens counseling. We may be justly suspicious of any special claims to a special kind of religious therapy. This can become terribly irresponsible. But if the Christian witness is a witness to truth, and if God's self-disclosure does enable proper self-understanding, then it seems that the counselor who presupposes the explicit witness of the Christian community to the source of self-acceptance conceivably could have a clearer vision of the counseling process than the psychotherapist who only implicitly makes this assumption without examining it.<sup>3</sup>

We would take issue with Oden's claim that the goal of preaching and counseling is self-understanding. But since that is not really his main point, we shall rather examine the following assertion:

[The question is] whether divine acceptance must be mediated *verbally*, or whether it can be authentically mediated unverbally through an interpersonal *relationship*. Our argument hinges on the assumption that liberating divine acceptance can be mediated concretely through interpersonal relationships without overt witness to its ground and source.<sup>4</sup>

That the Word of God and the presence

<sup>2</sup> (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1966), pp. 23 f.

<sup>3</sup> (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), pp. 26 f.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

of Christ is mediated to us both verbally and nonverbally is a valuable insight, but it seems that Oden, though trying to show the relationship between preaching and counseling, has succeeded in pitting them against each other. He acknowledges that at times a pastor in his counseling might "preach" for purposes of clarification, but he says nothing about the "presence" of the preacher when he stands in the pulpit. His conclusion seems to be that preaching is mostly verbal proclamation, while counseling is mostly nonverbal communication.

Such a distinction is not appropriate. It implies that the preacher must depend on counseling situations in order to experience the dimension of personal relationship with his parishioners, and that the people must depend on the spoken word of a Sunday morning to provide the content of the nonverbal communication that occurs in pastoral counseling situations.

The problem arises when we assume that "preaching originates in counseling" and that "counseling originates in preaching." Both preaching and counseling originate in the Word and promise of God. Luther spoke of the cross as the "speech" of God. It is an event through which God acts to redeem people, but it is meaningless for us to argue whether that was verbal or nonverbal action of God. The fact remains that since the Word became flesh, God was speaking to us through the words and the works of Jesus. Therefore the Gospel is communicated through the words and works of the church. In preaching, the pastor speaks within the church, within the relationships he has with his people. In counseling he relates to others within the body of Christ on the basis of an acknowledged, spoken word of God.

A pastor does not wear two different hats, one for preaching, the other for counseling. He may wear the one hat of his calling as a communicator of the Word of God to peo-

ple more on one side in one situation and more to the other side in another situation. But he remains to his people a man who communicates in both the language of words and the language of relationships.

This means that there is no easy way to become an effective preacher and a successful counselor. Both are functions of pastoral care that require training and hard work. Aside from technique, preaching and counseling are essentially the same in approach and appeal. What can be said of preaching applies as well to counseling.

Both are confrontational. In public or private, since he is dealing with people as persons, a pastor must confront them with the reality of their sin and interpret for them their experience of guilt and anxiety as the effects of the Law. He must lead them to accept responsibility for their predicament. Preaching or counseling that falls short of that is a refusal to relate people's lives to the living God.

Both are also prescriptive. In public or private a pastor must address his people as persons for whom God has acted redemptively in Jesus Christ, present to them God's involvement in their human situation to answer their need, and instill joy and freedom as the effect of the Gospel. In this way the pastor, whether in a Sunday morning worship setting or in a private counseling situation, invites his people to respond to God's forgiving power and presence in Jesus Christ with praise to God and loving service to the neighbor. Preaching or counseling that falls short of that is a refusal to receive the life of God and respond to His love.

Whether as preacher or as counselor, a pastor's task is to use God's appointed means so that His presence is conveyed. The Word always conveys God's judgment and as such interprets our situation in life, our human existence. God, however, not only compels us to face responsibility for our decisions and

actions, He also impels us to be responsible. For that He offers us a promise and grace. While preaching and counseling always have a concern for people's needs, such a ministry must always convey confidence in God's presence and love in Jesus Christ.

There is no need for an apology on our part for relating to people in terms of judgment and grace, whether in the pulpit or in the counseling room. Of course there is always the danger of being judgmental or preachy. All of us have the desire to express disapproval or to offer explanations. The extent to which we relate to people in that way provides evidence of our own anxiety and insecurity. That is what makes moralists or legalists. If we fear judgment, we will tend to be judgmental; if we are anxious about correcting things or straightening people out, we may become impatient with the Gospel and impose our easy answers in order to get quick solutions.

This is an obvious misuse of authority. In his book *Counseling and Theology* William Hulme explains the situation as follows:

Since the pastor has been guilty at times of using his theology as an evidence of his authority, theology has become associated with authoritarianism. Again the pastor has been known to give moral and religious advice that has created more problems than it has solved. Such advice is at least partially traceable to his personal theology; yet it brings discredit on theology itself. The pastor has failed as a counselor, it is charged, because he has functioned in a dogmatic way. . . . If it is true that people are not going to their pastor with their problems—and I believe it is—then part of the blame falls on the pastor. If by a dogmatic attitude we mean an unwillingness or inability to understand human nature, the pastor who has it will drive his people away. . . . When someone comes to him with a problem he feels obligated to solve it. In his anxiety to fulfill what he feels is expected of him he may prematurely let go

with his ideas and advice. This attitude of the pastor is also more a problem of psychology than of theology.<sup>5</sup>

Authority in preaching or counseling, though feared by some and misused by others, is essential for a powerful communication of the Word of God. Moralism and legalism hinder the Word; so does the nondirective approach. What was so astonishing about the approach of our Lord that compelled the evangelist to write that "He taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes"? (Matt. 7:29). Apparently there was something commanding about His approach that transcended the moralism, the legalism, the judgmental attitudes, the easy answers of the religious leadership of His day. Evidently He saw it as it is and told it as it is in such a way that turned people on instead of off. Writing in the *Christian Century*, George Benson said:

I am suggesting that the one thing which is really attractive in the 20th century is one of the things that we Christians call unique in our religion. Christ invented the idea of telling it as it is. He irritated, he maddened, he sometimes gave hope, but he was always listened to. He did not try to create an effect, he was not worried about consensus, he was not interested in peace of mind, he did not promise to make us beautiful people; but he was listened to.<sup>6</sup>

Benson describes this priestly authority to which people respond as the ability to stand in the darkness with others and shed light.

The Christian, and above all the Christian minister, can dare to look at the darkness within him; can dare to face up to the despair which seems to dog man's finest efforts as well as his worst; can dare to tell it as it is because he knows that now as always, when he has been willing to

<sup>5</sup> (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), pp. 16 f.

<sup>6</sup> "Psychoanalytic Notes on the Disavowal of Priestly Authority," *Christian Century* (May 28, 1969), p. 740.



face the darkness, he finds the light of the love of God.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus was one who lived in the midst of sin, but who communicated forgiveness; one who stood under the judgment, but believed in grace; one who knew the reality of death, but had hope; one who identified with all the sickness of the world, but brought healing and life to whomever He touched. That is always the authority of the Word of God.

Benson refers to such authority as priestly authority. What he seems to recommend, however, is really a prophetic authority. In traditional categories we tend to think of the prophet as preacher and the pastor as priest. Many people think that the preacher holds people's attention with sermonistic eloquence, and the pastor holds people's hands with sympathetic understanding. Such an unfortunate dichotomy forces many pastors to choose between one or the other, to concentrate on a public witness that challenges people to change the world, or to concentrate on a private ministry that comforts troubled individuals. This, of course, forces a wedge between the two forms of ministry, so that one may end up with preaching that has no basis in pastoral care and a pastoral ministry that lacks a prophetic witness.

The challenge of the ministry today is not to be a social prophet nor to be a pastoral counselor because those are the places where one's growing edge happens to be. Opting for one role can be a cop-out, a denial of the validity of the other. The prophet may presume to deal with people as though he could hope to help them without also being a pastor to them. The priest may consent to minister to people privately without taking advantage of the opportunity to share in the public proclamation of the Word of God that is something more than "group counseling." The prophet who witnesses to the need for change sooner or later turns

people off if he doesn't demonstrate a concern for them as persons. Similarly, the priest fails to minister fully to his people when he does not challenge them to serve God and their neighbor within the corporate structures of life. In his book *The Dynamics of Sanctification* William Hulme put it this way:

Since the pastor is a committed person, his pastoral counseling is more than problem-solving. While it may come into being as a result of the counselee's problem, the pastor's responsibility in his counseling goes beyond this immediate sense of need. The prophetic ministry can no more be separated from the pastoral counseling ministry than sanctification can be sacrificed to problem solving. The counselee has responsibility, not only for his own self-fulfillment or for the fulfillment of his marriage, but also for his neighbor in terms of the corporate structures of society. Beyond his responsibility to the counselee's sense of need, the pastor is responsible for confronting the counselee with his responsibility to the social order in his vocation as a Christian.<sup>8</sup>

It is inappropriate for us to try to separate His words and works, His prophetic and His priestly functions. It is just as inappropriate for us to divide preaching and counseling, since we communicate the Word of God in both ways. It is better for us to keep preaching and counseling together and to allow one to be supportive and reflective of the other. Preaching should be priestly to the extent that it demonstrates a sensitivity to human need; counseling should be prophetic to the extent that there is no shame about witnessing to God's presence in human existence.

A pastor who keeps both forms of ministry in perspective will be surrounded by men and women who long to hear the preached Word of God and who seek private pastoral care in their troubles.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966), pp. 133 f.

## *On Living Peaceably*

Repay no one evil for evil. . . . If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves. . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:17a, 18, 19a, 21)

In his book *The Strong and the Weak* Paul Tournier, a noted Swiss Christian psychiatrist, describes the different kinds of psychological reactions at work in people as they encounter and engage others. One person, for instance, may meet an attack by slugging the other fellow; another might be more willing to take a beating rather than resist. This is true in verbal battles as well as physical ones. As you know, we fight with words as well as fists.

In our culture we tend to admire the person who stands up and fights for his rights, and we usually have nothing but contempt for the person who backs off from any argument or encounter. In other words, we worship the attitude of self-defense or counter-attack, while we despise the person who becomes inappropriately apologetic when someone steps on his foot, as though it were his fault, as though he were almost willing to lie down and let the other fellow walk all over him.

Tournier reminds us that sometimes the strong reaction is a sign of weakness and the weak reaction may be a sign of strength. The real question, he says, is what kind of regard we have for ourselves. If we consider ourselves important in any relationship with others, then we will not be willing to let ourselves be used as a doormat just to remain attached to somebody. On the other hand, for the sake of the relationship we would be willing to absorb the stabs of another not because we are afraid but because we do not wish that the other person's action should become an occasion for breaking off the relationship. To have peace we need to be willing to become so involved in the life of another that we will insist on a genuine

reconciliation rather than an easy accommodation; to have peace we will need to refuse to give in to our natural reactions, to retaliate, to seek revenge, and thus to satisfy our own hurt feelings. Instead, we need to respond to the call of the Holy Spirit and meet others not with an attitude of self-righteousness but with a spirit of forgiveness.

If we are afraid for ourselves, we will seek to justify ourselves, even if it means punching somebody in the nose or just walking out on an argument. In either case we may be trying to get back at the other person. Our life together in the body of Christ, however, frees and equips us for a more constructive response when we deal with conflict and criticism. It is in the fellowship of Jesus Christ that we grow in self-acceptance and in the acceptance of others, where evil is not met with evil, but where my evil as well as the other person's evil is suffered away by the healing, forgiving Lord.

### I

Because we live with a mercy that overcomes judgment, we can be freed from defensiveness. We can face the facts. One of these facts is our natural need to retaliate. Christian or not, we are guilty of conduct ruled by "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." When something doesn't go our way, when someone rubs us the wrong way, we very easily become angry or quiet. When we are miffed and apt to shout or sulk, we are likely to tell someone off or never speak to him again. We all have sensitivities and sore spots, and when someone touches a wrong nerve, intentionally or unintention-

ally, we are ready to react in ways that are not always constructive.

But that's not the terrible thing, that we are capable of sinful reactions. There are times when it is good and healthy for us to be able to express how we feel. Too much can get bottled up within us and seething resentments can eat away our innards. Sometimes we explode so violently that we crush everything in our path. The problem comes when we allow our expressions or our outbursts to destroy fellowship. My sin may not be that I get angry (sometimes anger is a form of caring) but that I permit anger to become the occasion of driving my brother away or of withdrawing from him. Sin is finally the breaking of fellowship.

Ironically, it is within fellowship that our sin becomes all the more evident. When we are intimate with others, we seem to learn how to fight. We discover one another's weaknesses, and we try to capitalize on them. St. Paul saw that the Christians in Rome, because they enjoyed the openness and freedom of Christian fellowship, were tempted to use that opportunity to engage their brothers at short range. Familiarity breeds contempt, we sometimes say. But it isn't familiarity that really makes us contemptuous, otherwise we would be implying that it would be better if we remained strangers, for whoever gets upset with strangers! It's the people that we are close to that we kill. Even the crime reports every year show that most murders are committed against close acquaintances and relatives, like husbands or wives.

We do this, not because we have become too familiar but because we haven't learned how to handle our fears and frustrations. Of course, living close together, whether in the church or in the intimacy of marriage and family life, exposes us to one another. Our problem is really that we are unable to respond to the needs of each other. When people are unable to respond — which

means getting involved and "hanging in" there — they want to become lofty judges who peck away at another's faults or withdraw to a comfortable isolation.

This is the need to get back, to even the score, to inflict hurt or refuse to help. It's the kind of thing that happens when someone's feelings are hurt in the church and that person refuses to come back to church, as if to say, "I'll punish them with my absence." (Some people accomplish the same thing by threatening or committing suicide.) Or he may instead condemn the church loudly to anyone he meets. In any case, such a person does not work through his own problems and does not recognize his own faults or forgive the faults of others.

A clinical psychologist who specializes in marital hostility has divided marital battlers into various classifications: There are those who will not fight in the open. There are those who specialize in low blows. There are those who, rather than attacking each other, attack an idea or person beloved by the other. There are battlers with bottomless wells so far as their demands are concerned. There are those who specialize in withholding what they could give to the other; these are the sadistic mates who deliberately arouse the emotional insecurity of the other. There are battlers who not only fail to defend the partner but actually encourage attacks on him. And there are those who enjoy digging up the hidden perversions in the partner's personality. Perhaps you could add to the list.

## II

Somewhere the cycle of repaying evil with evil must stop. Somewhere a new chain of events must intervene to end hostility, to create peace and reconciliation. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor and professor who was imprisoned by the Nazis and executed shortly before the end of the war, wrote about the Christian life in this way:

The only way to overcome evil is to let it run itself to a standstill because it does not find the resistance it is looking for. Resistance merely creates further evil and adds fuel to the flames. But when evil meets no opposition and encounters no obstacle but only patient endurance, its sting is drawn, and at last it meets an opponent which is more than its match . . . Then evil cannot find its mark, it can breed no further evil, and is left barren. (*Cost of Discipleship*, p. 127)

Where else did the killing cycle of passing judgment and paying evil run itself to a standstill but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? Who else quieted vengeance and created reconciliation but the Lord who willingly suffered to death man's hostility toward God and took upon Himself the wrath of God toward men? Who else prayed for those who persecuted Him and did good to those who punished him? Who else has the power and love to receive our insults and hurt feelings, our animosity toward others, even our resentment toward God? Who else can absorb the anger of the world and give peace in return? Who else can gather us together into a close fellowship where we see and accept one another as brothers and not as enemies?

The new life our Lord calls us to live together within His body is that life He graciously offers to us in His Word as we believe it and in His body and blood as we share it. As St. Peter writes:

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on His lips. When He was reviled,

He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten; but He trusted to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:21-24)

Now that He has suffered for my sins — as well as the sins that others commit against me — there is no longer any need to keep the cycle of judgment and evil going. The need to get even is overcome by the reconciliation of the cross. Jesus met evil with good and brought healing to people, to those who wish to inflict pain on others or who would choose instead to withdraw from them. By His very body and blood given and shed for us He enables us to make the intimacy of life in His body, the church, not the occasion for crucifying each other but the opportunity for the closest and warmest kind of love. When anger or the urge to hurt another builds up within us, leading us to be destructive and endangering our relationship with God and with others, we have the freedom to resolve our conflicts with others or to talk about our feelings with a fellow Christian or simply to turn them over to the Lord Himself, who takes away the sin of the world, who by His forgiveness enables us to deal with others in a constructive fashion.

Brethren, "repay no one evil for evil. . . . If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves. . . . Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good."

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