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Homiletical Studies

THE WEDDING SERMON

A. The Setting of the Wedding Sermon

The essential tone is to be spiritual, not ostentatious. The focal point is the altar, not the bride or bridal party. The setting is to be a service of worship, not a production in the style of Lawrence Welk. The wedding may take place at an appropriate point in the Divine Service, Matins, Vespers, or another liturgical office. The Christian wedding is held in the church in the presence of the Christian community.

B. Theses on the Wedding Sermon

1. The cardinal content of the wedding sermon (regardless of the text) is to be the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. For the key call of the Old Testament prophets and John the Baptist, the heart of the sermons in the Book of Acts, and our Lord's final climactic word to His disciples were calls to repentance *to* the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:42 and the verses following).
2. A variety of texts will need to be developed by the preacher, however, since his hearers will hear him on many occasions in the same church. Here R. R. Caemmerer's "Biblical Modes of the Atonement" will be helpful and may be found on pages 330-331 of his *Preaching for the Church* (as listed below) as well as on pages 32-34 of volume 55 of this journal—in the midst of an essay by the present author which could also be consulted, namely, "The Plague of Generic Preaching" (*Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 55 [January 1991], pages 23-42).
3. Depending on the nature of the wedding party and worshipping congregation, the unique focus of the hearers' needs (counterbalanced by the more important question of what *they* need to hear) will be determined carefully.
4. The preceding considerations mean that the preacher's concerns are certainly, first of all, the following:
 - a. The situation of the couple is unique.
 - b. The congregation, however, is also involved (the *Sitz im Leben*).
 - (1.) The parents *have* released each person to a new relationship ("a man shall leave his father and mother . . .").
 - (2.) The people of God are making public witness and affirmation of this pledge.
 - (3.) The congregation, moreover, as *ekklesia* (as in

a baptismal rite) are, in effect, pledging a corporate nurture of this marriage and its progeny from womb to tomb, from cradle to casket.

- c. An appraisal of the (Christian or non-Christian) identity of any visitors is also critical.
5. The preceding considerations also mean that, even if a wedding couple suggests a specific text, the preacher still has to meet certain indispensable theological and homiletical criteria. The liturgy of the agendas to *The Lutheran Hymnal* and *Lutheran Worship* provide numerous theological cues to the appropriate application of law and gospel.
6. The introduction to the wedding sermon is particularly crucial. Especially if the bride and groom are standing eyeball to eyeball with the pastor, the first sentences of the preacher's words should set them at ease. Such words indicate *personal* address to them. Inept use of humor at this point—or anywhere else in the sermon—should be studiously avoided. Humor often distances the speaker from one's hearers in this kind of setting (although the self-convinced "Cheshire cat" fails to realize it). The couple (ideally) want to remember this wedding as a *sacred* moment, not as a "town meeting."
7. The particular circumstances will dictate the *length* of the sermon. The norm is ten minutes beyond the rite itself. If the couple is seated during the sermon and the pastor preaches from the pulpit, fifteen minutes is not too long. Here again there is an opportunity to evangelize those who are not as yet members of the Body of Christ.

C. Concluding Remarks

The *summa* is that Christ is the third partner in this marriage. It is a triangle, but He is the cornerstone. Christ crucified and risen is the heart of every wedding sermon.

Considering the limitations of time on the sermon, all the concerns noted above can never perhaps be fully met. But the thoughts which any visitors, especially non-Christians, may take away from this service is a sensitive theological issue. The law and the gospel, therefore, certainly need to be the heart of every wedding sermon.

For contextual data about the wedding service and whom the Christian pastor may marry, readers are referred to the author's *Myths About the Lutheran Church* (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1991). Recourse may be had particularly to "Myths about Christian Marriage" and "Myths about Christian Weddings" on pages 27-34.

D. Additional Resources

The following publications are not necessarily recommended for their theological or homiletical excellence, but they may trigger some viable ideas for the perspicacious preacher:

John M. Braaten. *Together Till Death Us Do Part*. Lima, Ohio: C. S. S. Publishing Company, 1987.

Richard R. Caemmerer. *Preaching for the Church*. St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1959; slightly revised, 1964. This classic work has just been reprinted by Concordia Publishing House in 1995.

Christian Marriage. Office of Worship for the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986.

Arthur Homburg, ed. *A New Wedding for You*. Lima, Ohio: C. S. S. Publishing Company, 1985.

Paul W. Nesper. *Biblical Texts*. Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Publishing House, 1952. This classic work has been reprinted by Concordia Theological Seminary Press, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825.

Rings, Roses, and Rejoicing. Lima, Ohio: C. S. S. Publishing Company, 1990.

Liam Swords, ed. *Marriage Homilies*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985.

Ernst H. Wendland, ed. *Sermon Texts*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1984.

Donald L. Deffner

THE AUGUSTANA AND PSALM 119:46

There are, certainly, many ways in which the hymnal sanctioned most recently by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), falls short of the older *Lutheran Hymnal* (1941), which rightly retains its official status in the synod. One of the positive elements, on the other hand, of *Lutheran Worship* and the materials associated with it is the restoration to the ecclesiastical year of the Feast of the Augustana, which had, indeed, been celebrated by Lutherans of more confessional times but had fallen into desuetude in the course of the twentieth century. In 1995 June 25 falls on a Sunday, and the opportunity is thereby afforded of involving a larger number of parishioners than usual in celebrating the Feast of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession and the Publication of the Formula of Concord. The following data are being offered, consequently, as resources which may be of some use in preparing a service in commemoration of the confessions which, solidly built on the foundation of Holy Writ, define the very structure of the Lutheran Church.

1. Liturgical Notes

The propers listed on pages 109-110 of *Lutheran Worship* seem, in general, quite appropriate to the occasion being discussed. The collect is the same as the collect already connected with the Festival of the Reformation and may, therefore, be found as well (in more traditional English) on page 84 of *The Lutheran Hymnal*. The ensuing formulation, however, could serve as an additional collect in the prayers of matins or vespers or following the sermon in the eucharistic service: "O Almighty God, by whose grace Thy saints confessed on this day before princes and peoples the pure doctrine of Thy word, keep us too, we pray, always steadfast in Thy truth and defend Thy church from all foes of Thy word, so that the gospel of Thy Son may be proclaimed to the salvation of sinners in all the world; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, age on age without end. Amen."

Lutheran Worship suggests, in addition, readings from the Old Testament (Isaiah 55:6-11) and the epistles (Romans 10:5-17) which resonate with clarity to the distinctive notes of a commemoration of the Augustana. The same may be said as well of the verses of Psalm 46 appointed as the body of the introit (46:1-3, 7) and the two verses of the Psalter conjoined as the gradual (146:5; 149:4). Psalm 46, of course, was the biblical fountainhead of the so-called "Battle-Hymn of the Reforma-

tion" ("A Mighty Fortress") and would logically serve as well as the main psalm in any service of matins or vespers on the Feast of the Augustana. The choice of the gospel (John 15:1-11) is presumably due less to any specific connection with the Augustana than to the sharing of the same propers with the commemoration of doctors of the church. Remaining within the words of our Lord at the Last Supper, the High-Priestly Prayer in John 17 (especially verses 6-8 and 14-21) would seem to afford verses fitting more closely the distinctive pattern of June 25.

A provision, on the other hand, of peerless propriety in *Lutheran Worship* is the appointing of Psalm 119:46 as the antiphon to the introit: "I will speak of Thy testimonies before kings, nor shall I be ashamed" (to provide a more accurate translation than the one which appears in *LW*). The historical connection between this verse and the Augsburg Confession rests on the words of the Blessed Reformer of the Church which are cited in the homiletical material printed below.

2. Exegetical Notes

a. *Isagogical Considerations*

Psalm 119 is called the Giant Psalm by virtue of being by far the longest in the Psalter—with 176 verses (as is reflected already in the title of Raymond F. Surburg's "Observations and Reflections on the Giant Psalm" [*Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 42 (January 1978), pp. 8-20], which may be consulted on additional points related to this psalm). It is also called the Golden Alphabet of the Christian by reason of its elaborate acrosticism; its twenty-two stanzas relate successively to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and all of the eight verses within each stanza begin with this same consonant. The theme of the whole is the significance of Holy Scripture in the life of the Christian, and to this end seven words or verbal duos, with differing nuances of meaning, are used of Scripture and its contents on a recurring basis, namely (as traditionally translated), law, word, utterance, statutes, precepts, commandments plus judgments, and testimonies (combining, in the final case, the two closely related cognates which are treated below). The listing, to be sure, of the vocables so employed in Psalm 119 varies considerably among the many commentators thereon; and the specific enumeration made here may be unique in some respects, but in others it agrees with the predication of "the use of eight terms for the Law" by Briggs and Briggs (Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, II [The International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1907], p. 415).

Each of the stanzas of the Golden Alphabet treats one particular aspect of the general theme of the psalm. Verse 46 is the sixth verse in the sixth stanza, in which each verse begins with the letter *waw*; the particular concern of the strophe is the Christian confession of the contents of Holy Writ. In liturgical usage the various stanzas of Psalm 119 were divided among the minor offices of daytime (prime, terce, sext, and nones) to be prayed in continual recurrence by those exercising themselves in the same devotional discipline as the psalmist himself practised, as he indicates especially in verses 164, 97, 147-148, 55, and 62 (Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., *The Psalms in Christian Worship* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976], pp. 58-59).

The author was clearly a figure of national renown (verses 74, 79, 99, 100), whom we should, then, expect to meet in the course of the historical books of the Old Testament; and of any the options available the prophet Jeremiah would seem to correspond most closely to the psalmist's intimations of experience and personality. For he had already as a young but learned man (verses 9, 99, 100) suffered persecution by many, including princes (verses 61, 83, 109, 141, 23, 46, 161). (The psalmist's personality is compared to Jeremiah's by Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* [London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975], p. 422.)

The closure of the canon of the Old Testament by Ezra and associates (as stated in the author's *Canonicity of the Old Testament*) excludes the Maccabaeian dating of the psalm asserted by Hitzig and Delitzsch (Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, V: Psalms*, trans. Francis Bolton [Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975 (1867)], III, pp. 244-245). Nor is Leupold at all convincing in allotting the composition of the psalm to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (Herbert C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1959], pp. 822-823). The actual connection with Ezra lies in his production of a definitive edition of the Old Testament as a whole, which required, in turn, the completion of the Psalter by gathering into a fifth and final book the remaining remnants of inspired hymnody (as depicted in the author's *Introduction to the Poetical Books of the Bible*). A major feature, of course, of the compilation of Book 5 of the Psalter was the inclusion therein of the Golden Alphabet.

b. Verse 46a

The conjunction beginning verse 46 is a weak *waw* which, however, is pointed with pathach by virtue of the undesirability of two vocal shewas in succession. The initial *waw*, in consequence, assumes the vowel which

is combined with shewa in the hateph-pathach under the ensuing *aleph*. Here, in fact, the conjunction, rather than ascribing temporal or logical consequence to an ensuing preterite, conjoins the psalmist's determination to *confess* his faith with the determination to lead a life of faith expressed in the previous two verses: "Wherefore I will keep Thy teaching continually unto eternity and evermore; and I will walk in openness, for Thy precepts have I sought" (verses 44-45).

The usual piel of the verb *dbr* occurs here in the elongate aspect (which is usually called the cohortative) of the first person (with the suffix which is often called a voluntative *he*). The specific force of the elongate here is emphatic (rather than cohortative), expressing determination (the most common use of the elongate in the first person singular). This force corresponds, clearly, to the same use of the elongate forms beginning the previous two verses. In each case, therefore, the proper translation in English is "I will" (expressing determination) rather than "I shall" (the ordinary future of the first person singular).

The *beth* attached to the noun following *dbr* can indicate instrumentality, locality, or even hostility; but here it clearly specifies the object of the speaking involved, as in Deuteronomy 6:7 and 11:19, 1 Samuel 19:3-4, and Psalm 87:3 (Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [abbreviated BDB; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1906], pp. 180b [piel 4c], 90b [IV.e]; Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and M. E. J. Richardson, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [abbreviated KBR], I [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994], p. 210b). The conception is presumably tantamount to speaking "with regard to" someone or something—or even (in Deuteronomy and here) "in terms of" something, namely, the words of God (enunciating, expounding, and applying them).

c. The "Testimonies" of God

Specifically, the object of the speaking here is the feminine noun 'ēdhāh, which occurs only in the plural and is synonymous with its more common cognate 'ēdhūth or 'ēdhuth (BDB, p. 730a). They are two of several words involving testimony which derive from the root 'wd, which is presumed to have "go about"—and so "return" and "repeat"—as its basic idea and is used in the piel to mean "surround" in Psalm 119:61 (BDB, p. 728b). The same verb, though rare itself, is also the source of the very common 'ōdh, which—signifying properly "a going round"—is used adverbially to express such concepts as continuation, persistence, and repetition, often becoming "again" in English translations (BDB, pp. 728b-

729b).

The four feminine nouns of the family of *'wd* which mean "testimony" in some way apparently derive from the ultimate root by way of the masculine *'ēdh* (meaning "witness") or its denominative verb *'wd*, meaning "bear witness" and specifically "testify" (BDB, pp. 729b-730a; Carl Schultz, "'wd," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* [abbreviated TWOT], ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke [Chicago: Moody Press, 1980], II, pp. 648a-650a). The semantic relationship assumed by students of the language is that "a witness is one who by reiteration emphatically affirms his testimony" (TWOT, p. 648b; similarly BDB, p. 729b). The lexicographers cited above distinguish as two separate words the *'ēdhāh* of Psalm 119, said to be found only in the plural, and the singular *'ēdhāh*, which is defined as "witness, testimony" and appears but four times in the TaNaK. The singular is apparently seen as the feminine counterpart of *'ēdh* and the plural as a variant of *'ēdhūth* (or as no more, indeed, than the artificial creation of the massorettes) (BDB, pp. 729b-730a). The scope of the plural is restricted to such "laws" as are regarded "as divine testimonies or solemn charges"; the singular is applied exclusively to objects which are grammatically feminine—of "seven ewe-lambs" in Genesis 21:30, of a "stone" erected as a memorial in Joshua 24:27 (where the word occurs twice), and of a "pillar" (a stone again erected as a memorial) in Genesis 31:52 (where *'ēdh* is applied in parallel fashion to a masculine word meaning a heap of stones).

The undersigned remains unconvinced at this time of the necessity of making a distinction between two disparate words, but the plural of *'ēdhāh* is, to be sure, restricted to the oracles of God (as, says Schultz [p. 649b], is true also of *'ēdhūth*). The absolute form occurs only in Deuteronomy 4:45 and 6:20, where it is conjoined in the same way with *ḥuqqīm* ("statutes") and *mishpāṭīm* ("judgments"); while the plural with suffix is conjoined with "statutes" and *mišwōth* ("commandments") in Deuteronomy 6:17. All the remaining instances of the plural of *'ēdhāh* are contained in the Psalter, namely, in Psalms 25:10, 78:56, 93:5, 99:7, 132:12, and 119 (*Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae*, ed. Solomon Mandelkern, ninth edition [Tel-Aviv: Schocken Publishing House, 1974], II, p. 830c-d).

The majority, actually, of the occurrences of *'ēdhāh* fall within the bounds of the Giant Psalm itself—fourteen times out of a total of twenty-two or twenty-six (depending on whether or not one distinguishes two

distinct words spelled 'ēdhāh). The plural form with a third masculine singular possessive suffix (referring to God) occurs in verse 2 of Psalm 119: "O the blessedness of them that preserve His testimonies." The form in all the remaining thirteen cases (as in Psalm 93:5) is 'ēdhōthekhā, using the second masculine singular possessive suffix (in addressing God), namely, in verses 22, 24, 46 (now before us), 59, 79, 95, 119, 125, 138, 146, 152, 167, and 168 (Mandelkern, II, p. 830c). The close cognate 'ēdhūth occurs, in addition, nine times in Psalm 119, once in the singular as "the testimony of" God's "mouth" (verse 88) and eight times in the plural (verses 14, 31, 36, 99, 111, 129, 144, 157) (Mandelkern, II, pp. 830d-831a).

The NIV, then, quite misses the special nuance of the first noun in Psalm 119:46 when it speaks there of the "statutes" of God (*The Holy Bible: New International Version*, International Bible Society, 1984). Koehler, meanwhile, ascribes to the word (which he treats as no more than a form of 'ēdhūth) the equally unsatisfactory meanings of "reminders" and "exhortations" (Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958], p. 683 a-b). The purpose, in actuality, of using the word 'ēdhōthekhā is to describe the very words of God as the testimonies in which He Himself serves as witness to Himself, iterating and reiterating His works and will to mankind. Nor can we restrict the scope of the word specifically to the laws of God as is generally done (so BDB, p. 730a).

Such a restriction rests partially on the misconception of the Old Testament represented thus by Schultz (despite the validity, properly understood, of the first sentence): "The law of God is his testimony because it is his own affirmation relative to his very person and purpose. While in the OT the written words constitute the testimony, it is the proclamation of the gospel which is the essence of the testimony of the NT" (Schultz, p. 650a). Strathmann evinces the same misunderstanding in speaking of the plural of 'ēdhāh as corresponding to "the concrete statutes of the divine attestation from which the Mosaic Law proceeded" in the form of "commandments" and "legislation" (H. Strathmann, "martus, martureō, marturia, marturion," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, volume 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967], p. 486).

The singular 'ēdhūth, to be sure, is applied in the Pentateuch to the decalogue, which is itself, however, not totally law (the gospel as well

appearing in Exodus 20:6 and in the Lord's self-designation as "thy God"). The plurality, moreover, of *'ēdhūth* all but once in the Giant Psalm and the predominance of the much less common *'ēdhāh* both serve to place some distance between the "testimonies" of Psalm 119 and any connotation of law adhering to the singular *'ēdhūth* by virtue of its previous usage by Moses (as is, indeed, already the likely purpose of Moses himself in using *'ēdhāh* in Deuteronomy 4 and 6).

Worthy of note, along these lines, is the parallelism involved in the first occurrence of *'ēdhāh* in Psalm 119. The "testimonies" of verse 2 clearly stand parallel to the *tōrah* of verse 1 by virtue of the same introductory formula: "Oh the blessedness!" This formula obviously reflects, indeed, the preface to the Psalter as a whole which is constituted by Psalm 1. The first three verses of Psalm 119 are with verse 115 the only ones addressed to anyone else than God, and they seem calculated to remind the church paraphrastically of the two opening verses of the Psalter. The thesis of Psalm 1, which is virtually identical with the theme of Psalm 119, is stated positively by connecting verse 2 with the initial words of verse 1: "Oh the blessedness of the man . . . whose delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law museth by day and by night."

The word *tōrah*, of course, means not "law" as opposed to gospel, but rather "teaching"; and in Psalm 1:2, clearly, it refers to the total teaching of God Himself in writing, which is to say in Holy Scripture. It is only in the form, after all, of the canon consisting in His own words that the teaching of God, directly speaking, can be read and pondered by day and night in the fashion of Psalm 1:2. The word *tōrah* is used in the same sense in Psalm 119, and the divine "testimonies" are, therefore, cotermi-
 nous with the "law" of God which comprehends both law and gospel and has, indeed, the gospel as its goal and central theme. Nestle and company, indeed, see an allusion, with good reason, to Psalm 119:46 in Romans 1:16; but, whether allusion or no, the apostle is speaking, in any case, of the purpose and defining principle of the "testimonies" cited here: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation . . ."

d. Verse 46b

The verb *bwsh* appears a hundred and nine times in the Old Testament and gives birth as well to two *hapax legomena* (meaning "shame" and "pudenda"), a noun used four times to mean "shame," and the more common *bōsheh*, likewise meaning "shame." Although the verb or one of its derivatives occurs a hundred and fifty-five times altogether, all but

twenty-five of these occurrences are found in the Psalter or the prophetic books (twenty of them in Isaiah and a full thirty-eight in Jeremiah). The NIV translates the second half of Psalm 119:46 in this way: "and will not be put to shame." Such a rendition accords more, however, with the idea of the *hiphil* of *bwsh* than with that of the *qal* found here. The Authorized Version and the NKJV translate more correctly, "and will not be ashamed," while the most accurate rendition is found in the NASB: "and shall not be ashamed" (*The Holy Bible: The New King James Version*, Thomas Nelson, 1982; *The New American Bible*, The Lockman Foundation, 1977).

There is, to be sure, some overlapping in meaning of the two *binyanim* in question, but the basic idea of the *qal*, as here, is actually "be ashamed." Thus, Brown gives "be ashamed" as the general meaning of the root and lists the meanings of the *qal* as follows: firstly, used absolutely, "feel shame"; secondly, with ensuing *min*, "be ashamed of, i.e. disconcerted, disappointed by reason of" something; and thirdly, with ensuing infinitive, "be ashamed to" do something (BDB, pp. 101b-102a). Richardson defines the *qal* as "be ashamed" in bold print before "be put to shame" in ordinary print (KBR, I, pp. 116b-117a).

Oswalt, too (or the editorial staff of the TWOT), gives "be ashamed" as the first meaning of *bwsh* (John N. Oswalt, "*bwsh*," TWOT, I, 97b-98b). He likewise includes among the five ways in which he sees *bwsh* as being used in the Old Testament "a feeling of guilt from having done wrong" (TWOT, p. 98b). In the meantime, however, he describes the most common usage as "expressing the disgrace which is the result of defeat at the hands of an enemy, either in battle or in some other manner." Seeing the thinking in this usage as being directed particularly to "the awful shame of being paraded as captives," he gives this explanation: "Involved here are all the nuances of confusion, disillusionment, humiliation, and brokenness which the word connotes" (TWOT, p. 98a).

More basically, and rightly enough (if properly understood), Oswalt describes the primary meaning of the root as "fall into disgrace, normally through failure, either of self or of an object of trust" (TWOT, p. 97b). He sees, nevertheless, "somewhat" of a contrast between "be ashamed" and *bwsh* "in that the English stresses the inner attitude, the state of mind, while the Hebrew means 'to come to shame' and stresses the sense of public disgrace, a physical state" (TWOT, p. 97b). There is, to be sure, some validity to both this distinction and the related statements quoted above; and Oswalt is speaking, as he says, of a difference in emphasis and

not in basic significance. Yet the reference to a "physical state" (although appropriate to some occurrences) surely goes beyond the pale of the general denotation of the word; an "objective state" would be more satisfactory terminology.

Qualifications are also required to the description of the disgrace involved as being specifically public. Even where, firstly, a specifically "public disgrace" is in view, the situation ordinarily involves as well, by virtue of the participation of all in a truly "public" phenomenon, a feeling of shame in the object of disgrace. Secondly, however, using such an adjective as "objective" or "external" to modify "disgrace" would again do more justice to the general connotation of *bwsh*. For the objectively existing disgrace which is entwined with a feeling of shame in such passages as the one at hand can only be understood as disgrace in the eyes of the Lord. For the believer in God, after all, is always the object of the scorn of this world precisely by virtue of his faith, whereas the world pays its own, of course, the homage which is rightly due the Lord.

Those of this world who in this life come to be ashamed of the sins which they see are (objectively) shameful in the eyes of God can then be consoled with the assurance of divine salvation. As to those, on the other hand, who remain in impenitence in this life, it is specifically in the ensuing judgment of God that the shame of each will be exposed to all—including himself. Also in this case, then, the disgrace begins with the objective determination of God and then necessarily extends to personal feelings of shame; the accusations of the divine judge echo unceasingly in the galvanized conscience of the man found guilty of impenitence.

Seebass, too, despite his critical presuppositions, stresses the centrality of the deity to the usage of *bwsh* in the Psalter (Horst Seebass, "*bwsh*," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* [abbreviated TDOT], ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis, II, revised edition [Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977], pp. 50-60). His formulation of the basic meaning, to be sure, lacks any reference to the spiritual—and, indeed, divine—dimensions of *bwsh* (TDOT, p. 52): "an experience in which" someone's "former respected position and importance were overthrown." He speaks rightly, nevertheless, of Psalm 25:2 (and such related passages as 22:6 [MT; EV 5], 25:20, and 31:2 [MT; EV 1])—"in Thee have I trusted; let me not be ashamed" (although he translates "put to shame")—when he locates the emphasis in the psalmist's relationship to the Lord:

"This relationship to God is always the important thing in the petition, and if it is not established his soul is humiliated even unto Sheol" (TDOT, p. 59).

Conversely, Seebass observes, "It is the importance of this relationship to God that makes one's desire that his enemy be put to shame intelligible" (TDOT, p. 59). Such a conclusion is clearly to be endorsed in all those cases in which the psalmists are requesting the eschatological shame of human enemies. In other words, rather than being motivated by a desire for revenge, the psalmist desires nothing more than the public manifestation of his God. For, in the end, the truth of God can be seen to be truth only when the falsehood of this world is shown to be falsehood.

As to instances outside the Psalter which demonstrate the theological-spiritual dimensions of *bwsh*, this study has space to cite but three. An example from Jeremiah (6:15) would be appropriate in view of his using the word-group involved more than anyone else as well as his authorship of Psalm 119 suggested above. The first word of Jeremiah 6:15 is a form of *bwsh* in the hiphil, while the sixth and eighth words are forms of *bwsh* in the qal, namely, the infinitive absolute (providing intensive force and so translated "in no way") and the plural imperfect respectively: "They have acted shamefully, for they have wrought abomination; yet were they in no way ashamed nor knew they to blush." (The argument here is unaffected by the decision of others to take the first clause of this verse as a question: "Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush" [AV].)

Two examples from Ezra would likewise be apropos in view of his relation to Psalm 119 by way of his editorship, already asserted, of the Psalter in general and of Book V in particular. The emphasis is clearly on a feeling of shame in the priestly scribe himself in 8:22, but 9:6 is especially revealing of the usage of *bwsh* (the binyan employed in both cases being the qal): "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to raise my face to Thee, O my God; for our iniquities have multiplied above our heads, and our guiltiness had grown up to the heavens."

Psalm 119 itself contains six instances of the verb *bwsh*, more than any other psalm (Mandelkern, I, pp. 181c, d, 182a). The hiphil is used (with negative jussive force) in verses 31 and 116, and the third plural of the qal (as a positive jussive) in 78. Most closely related, however, to verse 46 are verses 6 and 80, where the identical form *'ēbhōsh* occurs and following in the same way the negative *lō'*. Verse 6 is logically

subordinated to 5 by means of the initial adverb 'āz: "Oh that my ways may be established to keep Thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed when I look upon all Thy commandments." In verse 80 the imperfect acquires a final force (indicating purpose) from the preceding conjunction *lma'an*: "May my heart be blameless in Thy statutes, so that I may not be ashamed." Shame would, in these cases, clearly result from the sinner's conviction by the law of God—firstly in the eyes of the Lord and then also, in consequence, in the human conscience.

The use of *bwsh*, then, in verse 46, as the contrary of confessing the truth, corresponds in application to the dominical use of *epaischunomai* in Mark 8: "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (verse 38). The relevance of Romans 1:16 has already been noted above.

3. Homiletical Material

The following outline is offered as a possible aid in beginning the preparation of a sermon on Psalm 119:46 in the context of a celebration of the Augsburg Confession. Suggestions are also made in many cases of ways in which the outline could be amplified in the form of a finished sermon. The stipulated applications, however, of law and gospel to the life of the contemporary church—and, indeed, to the specific hearers being addressed—are, understandably, left completely to the formulation of the preachers themselves. The readers of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* will understand that ordinary homiletical usage has required some exceptions on these pages to the conventions of scholarly style which are normally upheld in this journal—allowing, above all, the use of the first person singular by the preacher and the use of the second person in addressing the congregation. Quotations of the Lutheran confessors are drawn from F. Bente's *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965; originally published in the *Concordia Triglotta*, 1921) or from *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert and others (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959; abbreviated *BC*).

A Godly Testimony

I. The Background of the Testimony of the Day

We celebrate today, on June 25, the Feast of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession and Publication of the Book of Concord. For it was on June 25 in the year 1530 that the Lutheran princes and cities of Germany presented a summary of the Lutheran faith to the imperial diet of the Holy Roman Empire. The regal assembly to whom this summary was read aloud on this day was meeting then in the city of Augsburg or Augusta, and so we call this basic testimony of the Lutheran church the Augsburg Confession or the Augustana.

During the following half-century the Blessed Martin Luther himself and various followers, in response to several needs, drew up six other statements which the Lutheran church came to regard as authoritative confessions of its faith along with the three creeds of the ancient church (the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian). Of the seven confessions of the sixteenth century the one which you know best is, of course, the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, which we have all studied prior to confirmation in the faith and communion in the sacrament of the altar.

In the year 1580 the Lutheran princes and cities of Germany gathered together the three creeds and the seven confessions of the Reformation into one volume which they called the Book of Concord or Concordia. And since then this volume defines the word "Lutheran." This congregation is Lutheran because it recognizes and asserts the Book of Concord as a true exposition of Scripture. Your pastors are Lutheran because we have studied the Bible and we have studied the Book of Concord and we are convinced that the Book of Concord is a true exposition of the Bible. Therefore we have pledged ourselves in our ordination oaths to teach and conduct ourselves in continuous conformity to the Scriptures and the Book of Concord. Thus, the Book of Concord still remains to the present day the public testimony of the Lutheran church. There we enunciate, along with our fathers, the faith which "we unanimously hold and teach," the faith which "we believe, teach, and confess," and there "we reject and condemn" all errors to the contrary—to use phrases here again which echo like refrains first in the Augsburg Confession and then in the rest of the Book of Concord.

In a letter of July 6, 1530, Dr. Martin the Reformer wrote the following words concerning the recent presentation of the Augsburg Confession to the imperial diet: "I rejoice beyond measure that I have lived to see the hour in which Christ has been publicly glorified by such great confessors of His, in so great an assembly, through this most beautiful confession. The word has been confirmed, 'I will speak of Thy testimonies before

kings'; and the ensuing word will also be confirmed, 'I shall not be ashamed.' For the Lord Jesus said, 'Whosoever confesses Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven.'" The words of Psalm 119:46 which the Blest Reformer quoted in this letter have, appropriately enough, appeared as a superscription on all subsequent copies of the Augsburg Confession: "I will speak of Thy testimonies before kings, nor shall I be ashamed."

II. The Characteristics of the Testimony of the Day

No words, indeed, could serve more aptly than these of Psalm 119 as the motto of the Augustana of the Lutheran Church. For the confessors of Augsburg clearly shared fully the desire which the psalmist expresses so eloquently in this verse and in the strophe in which it occurs, namely, the desire to make a good confession, to give a godly testimony. We should do well on this festive occasion to review three characteristics of the godly testimony mentioned in stanza 5 of Psalm 119.

A. *Sola Scriptura*

1. *Biblical Fidelity in Psalm 119*

Firstly, to be godly a testimony must be biblical, that is, it must have Holy Scripture as its basis and norm. The psalmist begins the stanza before us with this assertion: "Thy faithful love will come unto me . . . according to Thine utterance" (verse 41). In the following verses he avers: "I have trusted in Thy word" (verse 42), "I have waited for Thy judgments" (verse 43), "I will keep Thy teaching continually unto eternity and evermore" (verse 44), "Thy precepts have I sought" (verse 45), "I will speak of Thy testimonies" (verse 46), "I shall delight myself in Thy commandments which I have loved" (verse 47), "I shall lift up my hands unto Thy commandments which I have loved" (verse 48a), and "I will muse on Thy statutes" (verse 48b). After all, the theme of Psalm 119 as a whole is the significance of the word of God in the life of the Christian. By means of one term or another, indeed, reference is made to the word of God in virtually all of the 176 verses of this giant psalm. It is especially in verse 43, however, that the psalmist makes the point that a confession is good only if its sole source and norm be the inspired word which, for us today, is Scripture alone: ". . . take not the word of truth from my mouth in any way."

2. *Infidelity to Scripture Today* (*Application of the Law*)

3. *The Biblical Fidelity of the Confessors*

In opposition, however, to all the deviations of today the Lutheran confessors of the sixteenth century frequently call the Holy Bible the word of God in the sense of its consisting in the very words of God Himself; and they continually insist on Scripture *alone* as the source and norm of any testimony pleasing to God. It was, in fact, on the basis of Scripture alone that the Lutheran confessors composed the Book of Concord and pledged themselves to teach and to act in complete accord with the confessions which comprise it. Thus, the confessors state in the Preface to the Book of Concord: "We have in what follows purposed to commit ourselves exclusively and only, in accordance with the pure, infallible, and unalterable Word of God, to that Augsburg Confession which was submitted to Emperor Charles V at the great imperial assembly in Augsburg in the year 1530. . . ." (*BC*, pp. 8-9).

B. Godly Boldness

1. Boldness in Psalm 119

A second essential characteristic of a godly testimony is uncompromising boldness in the face of all opposition. The psalmist is determined to speak of the testimonies of God even in the presence of kings hostile to this witness. Elsewhere he observes, "Princes sat and spoke against me" (verse 23). Again, indeed, does he declare "Princes have persecuted me without a cause" (verse 161).

2. The Boldness of the Confessors

Such boldness was likewise a characteristic of the Lutheran princes and city-representatives who presented the Augsburg Confession to the imperial diet of 1530. The Emperor Charles V, after all, had attempted to suppress Lutheranism nine years earlier with the Edict of Worms, declaring Martin Luther himself an outlaw; but the evangelical princes of Germany had continued to protect the Reformer of the Church and to promote the Reformation. Now the emperor had summoned these princes to Augsburg to present a summation and defense of their faith.

In the imperial coronation several days following the issuance of this summons, the pope had laid on Charles the duty of defending the papal church against all enemies of the faith; and Charles had promised, in response, to be the perpetual defender of the Church of Rome. Nevertheless, in the course of the initial events of the Diet of Augsburg in June of 1530 the Lutheran princes refused to compromise their beliefs by kneeling

to receive the blessing of the papal legate or by bowing to the monstrance carried in procession. Margrave George of Brandenburg told the emperor quite frankly, "Rather than allow the Word of the Lord to be taken from me, rather than deny my God, I would kneel down before Your Majesty and have my head cut off." Despite imperial pressure, moreover, the Lutherans insisted on reading their confession aloud to the assembly and on reading it in German so that everyone present could understand.

Thus, the confessors of Augsburg truly spoke of God's testimonies before kings. They spoke His word loudly to the electors, princes, and city-representatives of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and to Ferdinand, King of Hungary and Bohemia. Yes, they spoke His word loudly to Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, King of Spain and the Two Sicilies, sovereign of the Netherlands, Mexico, and other lands in Europe, Africa, and America—in short, the most powerful man in the world and a man dedicated to the medieval idea of uniting all of Christendom in a common allegiance to emperor and pope. Before such kings did the confessors of Augsburg speak of God's testimonies with uncompromising boldness. Years later when one of these men, John Frederick, Duke of Saxony, was imprisoned by the emperor and threatened with death, he still calmly refused to compromise his confession in order to gain his freedom or save his life. At one point the captive prince wrote to the emperor, "I cannot refrain from informing Your Majesty that . . . by diligently searching the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures I have . . . learned to know and . . . unswervingly to adhere in my conscience to this, that the articles composing the Augsburg Confession and whatever is connected therewith are the correct, true, Christian, pure doctrine confirmed by, and founded in, the writings of the holy prophets and apostles."

The confessors of 1580 showed the same determined boldness as their predecessors when they presented the Book of Concord to all the world as the public testimony of the Lutheran faith. Thus, the princes and city-officials who published the Book of Concord declare in its preface: "We have ordered the incorporation of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 into the Book of Concord that follows . . ., so that everyone may see that we were not minded to permit any doctrine in our lands, churches, and schools other than" the truth of Holy Scripture "in the form in which it was once confessed at Augsburg in the year 1530" (*BC*, p. 9).

3. *The Need of Boldness Today*
(*Application of the Law*)

C. *Sola Gratia Sola Fide*

The question, then, is how can we confess the truth with boldness in a present which is depressing and in a future which looks even more menacing? How can we follow the intrepid examples of the psalmist in the Old Testament and of the Lutheran confessors in the sixteenth century—who spoke of the testimonies of God before even hostile kings? The answer can be found only in the third and most essential characteristic of a godly testimony, namely, in the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

1. *Grace Through Faith in Him Who Was to Come*

The psalmist shows the source of his special boldness in verses 41-43 of Psalm 119: "Thy faithful love will come unto me, O Lord, even Thy salvation, according to Thine utterance. So shall I answer a word to him that reproacheth me, for I have trusted in Thy word. So take not the word of truth from my mouth in any way, for I have waited for Thy judgments," which is to say, "I have hoped in Thy judgments." Thus, the psalmist's confidence arises from the salvation of his soul to which God, purely by virtue of His fatherly mercy, has committed Himself in His word. In other words, it is his faith in the promised Messiah as his Saviour that makes the psalmist bold enough to speak of the testimonies of God before commoners and kings.

2. *Grace Through Faith in Him Who Has Come*

It was from the same source, too, that the Lutheran confessors of the sixteenth century received the courage which they needed to proclaim the word of truth in the presence of a hostile emperor and empire—except that the confessors, like us, have much more reason for confidence than had the ancient psalmist. For the Messiah has now come and fulfilled the promises of God and effected salvation. It was, as the Apostle Paul writes, "Jesus Christ who in His testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession" (1 Timothy 6:13 RSV). Even in His silence, indeed, Christ Jesus made the good confession. For by remaining silent in the face of all the accusations brought against Him in the course of His trial, He confessed His guilt. No, to be sure, He never committed a single sin Himself. Yet He knew that He was guilty of every sin which had ever been committed or ever would be committed in the history of the world—by virtue of God's imputation of the guilt of all us sinners to Him—and Him alone. The Son of God, in consequence, did not protest His agonizing death on the cross or even His temporary desertion by His

Father. By arising from the dead, however, He declared all men righteous—by virtue of God's imputation of His holy innocence to all and each of us. These are the judgments to which the psalmist looked ahead in verse 43—"I have hoped in Thy judgments"—the judgment of condemnation on the Messiah and so the judgment of acquittal on all of us.

When He had accomplished salvation, the Lord sent His church into all the world with the testimony of His gospel—to confess the good news of salvation. Soon, to be sure, incredible as it may seem, the church fell under the spell of the false teachers whose coming the prophets and apostles had predicted. The pastors and professors of the church themselves proceeded to corrupt its testimony in many and various ways. In general, however, all the deviations involved served to give a part to man in his salvation, thereby detracting from the unique glory of Jesus Christ as Saviour on His own.

But then, likewise in accord with the prophecy of Scripture, God raised up the Blessed Martin Luther, as Reformer of the Church, to proclaim anew to all the world the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ in all its truth and purity. So it is that the Lutheran Confessions of the sixteenth century consistently emphasize salvation by grace alone through faith alone as the central article of Christian doctrine. At Augsburg in 1530 the Lutheran princes of Germany testified before the Holy Roman Emperor, "The conscience cannot come to rest and peace through works, but only through faith, that is, when it is assured and knows that for Christ's sake it has a gracious God . . ." (Augustana XX:15; *BC*, p. 43).

3. Grace Through Faith Today

(Application or Elaboration of the Gospel)

III. The Summation of the Testimony of the Day

Thus, it is only through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ that we too can confess the truth of the word of God with uncompromising boldness in the face of all opposition in the present or the future. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can enable us to make our own those intrepid words of the confessors of 1580: "By the help of God's grace we too intend to persist in this confession until our blessed end and to appear before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ with joyful and fearless hearts and consciences" (*BC*, p. 9).

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