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Preaching on the Holy Spirit: A Study of Luther's Sermons on the Evangelical Pericopes

By MARTIN E. MARTY

"IN our day the Holy Spirit suffers great ignominy," sighed Luther, in reference to current doctrinal misunderstanding. "In our day the Holy Spirit suffers great ignominy," might be a contemporary comment on neglect of the worship of, and witness to, the Holy Spirit. It has become almost a rubric to bemoan this neglect on Whitsunday, the third great feast of the church year, but this complaint is often followed by a tendency to contribute to the neglect and the ignominy through silence from the pulpit, as far as a living concern for the work of the Holy Spirit is concerned, on the other days of the year.

Theological interest, paralleling the revival of the doctrine of the church, has returned to the witness to the Holy Spirit, but it has failed to affect preaching to any large degree. If the pew needs guidance, the pulpit needs study. A historical study will help: from the Reformation's acceptance to Rationalism's rejection of the ancient formulae, through the 19th century's reconstruction, especially through Schleiermacher and his impersonal *Gemeindegeist* down to the contemporary reassertions of the "personality" of the Spirit in various forms in C. C. J. Webb, W. R. Mathews, Leonard Hodgson, and the somewhat modalistic expression of Barth, the story holds interest and edification.¹

This article confines itself to one corner of the historical task, an approach to Luther's preaching on the Holy Spirit. But the corner is large, especially for the Church of the Reformation, which naturally turns to Luther for some degree of its understanding and to his preaching for his most direct witness to what interests our preaching today. Luther regarded his sermons as his "best book of all."²

While there is a persistent emphasis on the Holy Spirit in much of his preaching, this study is confined to his sermons on those Gospel pericopes which have reference to the work of the Holy

Spirit in the text. These number ten; six fall on Sundays, and four on festivals;³ and thus presented, they might well be of interest to the preacher planning a series on the Gospels or for general theological interest, especially in the season of Pentecost.

The Trinity sermons provide a frame of reference for all those studied; then follows an analysis of sermons on the five texts which relate the work of the Holy Spirit to individuals, followed by four which relate to the work of the church under the Spirit. The first and last four are from the Fourth Gospel; four of the Synoptic texts are from Luke 1 and 2.

The analysis is ordinarily made from the Roerer manuscripts in the Weimar edition. If this means that they are a "second-hand" reproduction of Luther, a study of the various comparable (but ordinarily less accurate) autographs and printed versions show little significant variation and warrant considerable confidence that in the main we have the "real" Luther. The citations are made out of a wide possibility of references and are to be thought of ordinarily as "typical." Prenter's study has shown that Luther's teaching on the Holy Spirit is largely consistent before and after the battle with the "fanatics" from 1523—1536, and this study has borne out his conclusion. For that reason the dating of the sermons is of secondary interest.

The purpose of the study is to look via Luther beyond Luther to the earlier witness to the Holy Spirit to suggest a critical re-examination of the Scriptural testimony and to confront anew Luther's own faith, based on that testimony, in the power of Pentecost: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him, but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel . . . even as He calls . . . the whole Christian Church on earth . . . and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith."

Those familiar lines are a brief summary of the emphasis in these sermons.

I. THE FLESH-SPIRIT ANTITHESIS

1. *Trinity (John 3:1-15)*

In these sermon Luther's interest in the Person of the Holy Spirit, the radical opposition of the realms of flesh (or nature) and the Spirit, and the external means for the internal witness of

the Spirit of God set the pattern for the other series of sermons studied here.⁴

While nothing but a personal view appears, it is true that Luther treats rather perfunctorily and sketchily the doctrines relating to the Trinity.⁵ He is careful to identify "spirit" in John 3:5, 6, and 8 with the Holy Spirit.

His real concern is to show how this text divides all, *coram deo* and *coram hominibus*, into realms seen in the viewpoint of God and of man, of sky and of earth, into theocentric and anthropocentric concerns.⁶ The realm of man he calls "flesh," following the text, or "nature." The definition is important and extensive. Note how it includes "soul"! ⁷ "The flesh is the whole man with body and soul, reason and will, and he who has fleshly perception, disposition, desire, and will, is not born of the Spirit. For the soul is so deeply submerged in the flesh . . . that it is more 'flesh' than the flesh itself."

Without the miraculous gift of the Spirit all that is of man remains flesh, despite one's highest aspirations.⁸ "Nature" parallels this in its opposition to God, and Christ in this conversation with Nicodemus "slaps against nature." Luther, in outlining the limitation of this realm, has the homiletical purpose of seeking to create hunger for the Gospel in his hearers by a recognition of the limits of natural reason before the mystery of God, based on the observation of reason's limits in the natural world (v. 8).⁹

Nicodemus is presented as the "flesh" at its highest. Here man's own piety and God's truth clash. Despite his learned, holy, powerful status, he cowers in the darkness, facing the truth in fear.¹⁰ This best of men excels only *in externo regimine*, and he must be born again, an idea ludicrous to the man.¹¹ He, after all, has his works to present; but Christ includes them in "flesh."¹² This is not because the flesh in every sense is wrong — we are to remember that Christ Himself was flesh — but that here it means man seeking his own, even in religion. Not skin but sin is involved — Luther shows no Hellenistic revulsion at flesh for its own sake.¹³

Luther here exhorts his hearers, "submerged in flesh," to seek with Nicodemus the answer of rebirth ("We have many Nicodemuses today"),¹⁴ and he shows how Christ lays for them a completely new ground and foundation.¹⁵

This is the realm of the Spirit, in no sense the product of reason and in every sense that of a faith created as the proper work of the Holy Spirit of God. It stands in complete opposition to all that man as flesh stands for¹⁶ (*Du must gar eyn ander man werden, anderwärts geporen werden*).¹⁷

Then all is new: new birth, new nature, new creation, new essence, new achievement and possibilities.¹⁸ Is not this emphasis one of the more neglected aspects of Luther's thought in relation to nature and reason? Man remains man, with members as before, but the new gift from above makes him new and different.¹⁹ This new essence (*Wesen*), which makes the Christian himself "spiritual," means that now what man does under this is to God's own glory,²⁰ while man is literally "free as the wind" in the Spirit (John 3:8).

If the Person of the Spirit and the flesh-spirit antithesis are recurrent and central, so, too, is Luther's understanding of the Spirit's work of bringing, through the external Word, this new birth and new realm. The Word here refers to the preaching of Christ.²¹ The Word also refers to the Sacraments—in John 3, especially to Baptism. Baptism means the spiritual transition from one realm to another, because of Christ's command and its connection with children, who have no other means of receiving the Spirit. In Baptism "I" give nothing (the way of flesh) and receive, in accepting the Spirit's gift, remission, the Word, and the Spirit Himself.²²

II. THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH INDIVIDUALS

2. *The Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38)*

"I believe in Jesus Christ . . . who was conceived by the Holy Ghost"; these words of the Creed are based on Luke 1:35 in this text for the Annunciation, March 25. This emphasis was for Luther the reason to commemorate the day.²³ Again he is contented but little concerned with the creedal formula and its controversies. He uses the festival to enforce the significance of Christ's conception by the Holy Spirit.²⁴

Here began God's intervention in history in man's form and flesh. This Gospel is to emphasize the divine character of Christ's conception. (The sermons have, incidentally, considerable polemic interest, which does not here concern us.)

Luther is surprisingly concrete about the meaning and moment of the conception. The Holy Spirit becomes Mary's "proper spouse" with his co-operation with her after her question, "How can these things be?"²⁵ and in her response, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord."²⁶ The significance of the event is in that the Holy Spirit supplies what goes beyond "nature" in the origin of Christ's human existence. Several terms are used: *creation* (this is a unique action on one Virgin of Nazareth)²⁷ and *reason* (it is transcended: witness Mary's puzzlement.²⁸ Her reason might well have disputed had she followed it, for her whole nature and creaturehood would have inclined that way.)

The Gospel still, he says, faces one with the necessity of decision at this point: believe or disbelieve! But the Spirit, who interrupts the order of nature, also supplies faith through the Word, as He did to Mary, who "clung" to it. This clinging was a gift.²⁹ Luther agrees with Bernard that there were three miracles here: that God was made man; that His mother was a virgin; that a human is able to believe this, but not without the gift of the Spirit.³⁰ Such a Gospel is easy to preach but hard to believe.

The emphasis here again is on the external Word of the angel as the Spirit's means. It is the gift of the Spirit that helps one face the offense: "Christ, the Creator of heaven, is the Son of a virgin."³¹ This pericope presents Luther with opportunity to deal with this scandal of Christ's assumption of the flesh, most striking because of the flesh-spirit antithesis. The flesh here, though, means something else. Flesh opposed to spirit is sinful, unclean, related to normal and natural human birth: "All that comes forth from fleshly conception is unclean; so Christ is born of a virgin."³² The flesh when referring to Christ merely affirms his humanity and has nothing to do with sin:³³ "His blood was red and his skin white, and he drank and cried and slept, etc., but faith discerns this child from among all others, for his flesh was from the first moment clearly nothing but fair, because he was God's son."

The homiletical concern for the hearer is seen in Luther's exhortation to remain with the external Word as Mary did: "If you wish to receive the Holy Spirit and to hear the internal Word, hear first the external."³⁴ Mary is a model for "clinging to the Word," but since his hearers face different "scandals," he relates this to their

existential concerns with forgiveness and resurrection. Here, too, the Spirit provides what nature cannot. Contemporary preaching which faces the offense of Christ's assumption of flesh and the challenge to hear the Word coupled with the consolation of its content with the Holy Spirit's work has echoed Luther's concern.

3. *The Visitation (Luke 1:39-56)*

Ordinarily the Magnificat receives most attention here, but a parallel interest deals with the total text, which Luther sees as a commentary on "born of the Virgin Mary."³⁵ After introductory materials he comes in most of the sermons to Elizabeth's response to Mary's greeting, which includes being filled with the Holy Spirit. Here again the Spirit supplies what is beyond "nature" and the natural order of events in the response to the external Word as witnessed in the recognition by Elizabeth of Mary as mother of the Lord, in John's response in her womb, and in the origin of Christian faith.

We have here again a connection with a most important point for faith: What is the relation of the external Word to the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart? Luther throughout avoids both the "fanatic" rejection of the external Word, the slighting of the Spirit through dishonoring the means,³⁶ and the Romans, who add "means" in ecclesiastical traditions.³⁷

The Word here is always *verbum vocale*, *mündlich Wort*, or *verbum externum*, in the salutation of Mary. Though her words are not even recorded, Luther makes them all important as the point of contact for the rest of the action of the narrative. Elizabeth says, "your voice," not "your spirit," touched me.³⁸

Luther applies this to the importance of the *verbum vocale* in his day; its weight does not bear on things that are not of God (the Word of God remains the Word of God), but it affects human relationships when they are grounded in the Word—a typical example is the injunction to honor parents.³⁹

The Word is not an arbitrary means; one cannot remain in his chamber and expect God to speak directly to him. This Word must be preached, read, written, heard; the stress is on the Spirit's use of physical means, the mouth and ears of ordinary mortals.⁴⁰ This for Luther is the miracle of the church. We baptize and

preach; yet it is not really we, but the Spirit. Prophets, Apostles, ministers, are essential, but only because the Spirit chooses to use them.

As in the Annunciation sermon he catalogs all that the Spirit contradicts: the experience of man and human sense and reason (*intellectus, Vernunft, Verstand, ratio, Sinn, Witz*).⁴¹ John in the womb has not full sense and reason, yet he responds: he has "enough reason for God," says Luther!⁴²

The Spirit's work here is to fill the mother with "sharp eyes" to see Mary's pregnancy also and to recognize it as one whose fruit will be her (Elizabeth's) Lord. A new light thus comes to her heart.⁴³ All depended on the word of greeting. The growth of Elizabeth's faith is the real miracle of the story, more marvelous than John's greeting by the "leap" in the womb.⁴⁴

Luther applies this to his hearers. The Word must be used (the sword does nothing unless taken in hand) to be creative; but its creativity, changing the whole of man, depends on the Spirit.⁴⁵

4. *The Nativity of St. John the Baptist (Luke 1:57-80)*

This text centers in the Benedictus of Zacharias, which the Evangelist prefaces: "His father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. . . ." It hardly seems to be a significant reference. It has most in common with the preceding allusion in the Visitation pericope and is of peripheral interest to Luther, too.⁴⁶

This "minor" festival Luther brings to prominence for the way it shows the pre-eminence of Christ over John. The Holy Spirit supplies in this narrative again what the natural order of things could not.⁴⁷ The contrast is between unbelief and faith in this case, a faith worked by the Spirit. This is clear in a *Summa* to the 1522 sermon in Roth's *Festpostille*.⁴⁸ "Whom unbelief had made dumb, the Holy Ghost made into a prophet. In this we see the first fruit of faith, namely, the praise of God and the confession of faith, whose fruit is in all believers. Therefore the Psalm says: 'I believe; therefore I speak.'"

Zacharias' proper naming of John and his song, which tells of John as preparer for Christ, testifies to his role as one inspired of the Spirit (*ex instinctu Spiritus Sancti*).⁴⁹ The Benedictus, fruit of Zacharias' faith, witnesses to the miracle. "Here you see

Zacharias full of the Holy Spirit, and he recognizes truly the kingdom of Christ and draws back his own son, that here it might be that God begins to visit his people.”⁵⁰

5. *The Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of Mary*
(*Luke 2:22-32*)

Ordinarily Luther used this text to preach on the freedom of the Christian man, his relation to the Law, and other similar matters. On other occasions⁵¹ he gave due attention to another incident in which the Holy Spirit is described in relation to an individual, Simeon, to whom it had been revealed by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. The Reformer presents this in a way consistent with the other pericopes, but he is faced with a new problem.

In this account, too, the Holy Spirit brings what man's own *ratio*, sense, and eyes could not have: the ability to receive the Lord Christ in the Infant presented.⁵² The Lordship was hidden (*occulte*) in the Child.⁵³ The Holy Spirit had to identify the moment and provide the condition of faith for Simeon.⁵⁴

The concentration is on Simeon's eyes — corporeal before, and spiritual and acute after, the Spirit's work.⁵⁵ In one instant Simeon knew that all Scripture centered in this Child!⁵⁶

The new problem for Luther was that no *verbum externum* appears here. The “fanatics,” those who opposed his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, seized on this context to criticize his viewpoint, and in the 1528 sermon he attempts to deal with them. They had contended that it was necessary to have the Spirit before the Word. Luther stresses the fact that the Holy Spirit was on Simeon and had revealed these matters before the incident, and that it came through his life of contact with the Word. But to contend for this interpretation, Luther must rely on inferences from other accounts to support his consistent view for the precedence of the spoken Word. Since the inference is not sufficiently supported by other accounts, it is little wonder that he develops the theme somewhat sketchily and self-consciously.⁵⁷

6. *Invocavit* (*Matt. 4:1-11*)

The slightest reference to the Holy Spirit in the Gospel pericopes is in Matt. 4:1, which tells of Christ's being led “by the Spirit”

into the wilderness to meet the temptation of the devil. Luther gives this least attention among these sermons, too; this is natural because of its small role in the narrative, but regrettable for it would have provided the only opportunity to see Luther's view of the only Synoptic pericope that deals with the Spirit and the actions of Christ.⁵⁸ Instead Luther stresses the point that the Holy Spirit provides what man cannot of himself and should not wish to: the impulse to confront temptation and to receive this as a gift of grace, something his nature and his reason prevent him from doing.

He begins by sharing his view that temptation, trial, *Anfechtung*, must come to all Christians. That it happened to Christ may be a source of comparison and comfort to all believers. But Christians are not to seek temptation or to flee with the hermit to the desert. The Christian, as Christ, must be guided in this facing of temptation by the Spirit, who will not desert him.⁵⁹ Faith is strengthened through temptation and God glorified through the Christian's triumph over it.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

7. *Whitsunday* (John 14:23-31)

Luther sees the disciples as the representatives of the church of all ages as they heard the last discourses of Christ. Thus the Paraclete sayings of John 14—16 appear in a churchly context. Three of the four are in the evangelical pericopes for the year, and a fourth text from John dealing with the Holy Spirit is designated for Quasimodogeniti. Here two new concerns appear: the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and the relation of the Spirit to the person and work of the Jesus Christ of history.

Whitsunday sermons, of course, are largely dedicated to the work of the Holy Spirit,⁶⁰ and Luther selects that verse of John 14 in this text which deals with the Spirit for special emphasis.

The Fourth Gospel presents the discourse as the last words of Christ to his assembled disciples on the night before His death. They are frightened and comfortless. Jesus comforts them and fills the void created by His absence with the promise of the Holy Spirit, under the name "Paraclete."⁶¹ Here the disciples and the church stand in need of the Spirit as did the individuals in the pericopes discussed above. The Holy Spirit breaks their limits of flesh, sin, humanity, reason, sense, all that belongs to the "natural."

First, the conscience of man afflicts and pains but cannot lift him without the help of the Spirit.⁶² Conscience merely heightens the awareness of *Anfechtungen*, the doubts and trials which plague the Christian because he remains man while on earth — man with all the possibilities of doubt and despair. *Anfechtungen* here are not seen as curses; they set up the revelatory constellation in which the Holy Spirit works.

The promise of the Spirit confirms in their pride the proud (the *probi* become *probiore*),⁶³ but, since the Spirit only visits those in need (*Spiritus non venit nisi turbatis et afflictis*),⁶⁴ man must face despair to know consolation. The Spirit does not visit the self-contented (*pacatis*).⁶⁵ But the simple fact that God uses these *Anfechtungen* does not make them easier to bear; they are a shattering experience of loneliness and sadness and belong to the realm of war and death through which the Spirit breaks with the gifts of peace and life.⁶⁶

Only the Word with the Spirit can lift man; legal righteousness never can. The Holy Spirit "abrogates" the Law and sets man free from it.⁶⁷ If the Law cannot lift man from *Anfechtungen*, neither can church traditions. To claim for the human aspects of the church's life the sanctification of the Holy Spirit is to invade God's sovereignty and to presume upon His love. These traditions, in fact, belong to the realm of law. Petty church decisions (which bishop is "higher" than which other bishop?) are not to be attributed to the Spirit.⁶⁸ The Holy Spirit, Luther says, has more important things to do than to fret about institutional order and church vestments. All of these do not belong to the realm of consolation, but the Holy Spirit is called a "Comforter."⁶⁹

Since man is helpless without the Spirit, Luther dwells on His coming as Paraclete under the offices: *exhortator*, *animator*, *impulsor*, *inspirator*, *incitator*.⁷⁰ This "functional" emphasis reveals a disregard for the more abstract concerns with the doctrine of the Trinity but does not imply a rejection, and on occasion the Reformer tries to work at making it meaningful and dynamic.⁷¹ The Holy Spirit as Paraclete is to come after Christ's death when the church's need is dramatically emphasized, to be with the church forever where Christ is preached. Only on the "Last Day," in the church's triumph, will this character of the Spirit's work cease.⁷²

The preached Word existed before the specific bestowal of the Spirit of which Christ here speaks, for the Prophets and Christ Himself were effective before it, but effective preaching of Christ cannot now be thought of apart from this historically identifiable gift of the Spirit to the church.⁷³ The familiar emphasis on the spoken Word reappears in these sermons.

After the preaching the Spirit impresses (*imprimit*) His message so that it "sticks" (*haereat*).⁷⁴ The work is done on the heart of man (*ins hertz Christum treiben* is the familiar phrase). To preach words of Christ without this Spirit's work is fruitless, though these words number, says Luther, in the hundreds of thousands.⁷⁵

In the spirit of Whitsunday Luther shows how the Spirit's work in the heart is not a static impartation; he likes especially the symbol of fire.⁷⁶ The contrasts of the flesh-spirit antithesis reappear. Man, even in fellowship, remains limited by his reason, frightened, sad, unholy, until the Spirit brings into that fellowship understanding, boldness, comfort, sanctification, and joy.⁷⁷ All these contrasts come about because the Spirit creates the church, remits sins, and makes possible the resurrection of the body. For in this church the Spirit has a teaching role, limited in content to what Christ said, was, and did, but broadened in effectiveness after Christ's glorification.⁷⁸ It all depends on Christ: *Spiritus Sanctus re efficiet quod ego polliceor*.

8. *Exaudi* (John 15:16 to 16:4)

This text for the Sunday after the Ascension is similar to the preceding one, but a new emphasis on the Paraclete as Spirit of Truth appears. Luther as homiletician sees possibilities of comfort and the providing of a *rationale* for the church's preaching here. There is surprisingly little on the dogmatic implications of the Spirit's procession from the Father, alluded to in John 15:26. The Trinitarian position is assumed; the preacher's function is to make it dynamic.⁷⁹

On this groundwork Luther shows how the Spirit of Truth is not simply man's spirit at its highest but is radically different from it and from what the world calls truth. The Spirit appears in contrast to the realm of nature. Reason and sense couldn't have invented Christianity.⁸⁰

World efforts at truth are doomed by man's limitations. Its justice and wisdom are lies. Where God's Spirit is, is truth; where He is not, all is false.⁸¹ The eternal temptation of the church is to claim truth for itself which it cannot possess; everyone, sighs Luther, wishes to be wiser and to go "XV grades higher" than the Spirit.⁸²

The world's spirit leads to death and despair and fear; it has a false comfort, based on goods, glory, and power.⁸³ Luther warns that these fade before fever and adversity; in this state man sees that the comfort has been illusory and is ready for the Spirit of Truth and His comfort. But in coming He takes unexpected form. Luther prepares his hearers for this unexpectedness by reference to the heroes of faith. John the Baptist, for instance, suffered while Herod whored, just as the Christian will experience little of the world's type of comfort while the world indulges in pleasure. But in the midst of this situation God's Spirit comes to John in his prison and the Christian in his loneliness and brings real comfort: "Hans, Hans, do not worry — you are my beloved."⁸⁴

The comfort of the Spirit can be relied upon as God's own comfort, and as a *rechtschaffener Geist*, a Spirit of integrity, uprightness, based on the Old Testament understanding of "truth"⁸⁵ and in its involvement of the ethical in the sense in which First John speaks of "doing the truth."

Receiving the Spirit prepares man to meet sin: "Not that man shall not feel sin (for the flesh must feel it), but rather that the Spirit subdues and suppresses the purblindness and fear and conveys us through."⁸⁶

The Paraclete's message centers in Christ, the Embodiment of truth. Since only in Christ can truth be found, the Spirit cuts off all doctrine not centered in Him.⁸⁷ The Christian can judge all preaching from this ground.⁸⁸

The Exaudi sermons are most significant in their expression of the different bases of world truth and truth as centered in Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Discriminator, and the one who makes possible the personal awareness that Christ is *mine*, a confession deeper than dogmatic, objective assertions about Christ.⁸⁹

Luther's emphasis on the preached Word here is directed to

urging to witness. What happens to the Apostles is to happen to all believers: they, too, become witnesses.⁹⁰

For this reason the church does not challenge the world with institutions, laws, traditions, or dead letters. Possessing the living Word, its message is radical, prophetic, upsetting. How a lonely, lowly group of disciples could upset a civilization and how the church can do so today, says Luther in effect, depends on a courage given by the Spirit. For preaching remains *onus intolerabile*, an intolerable burden, until the miraculous gift of God's Spirit brings the promised bravery and joy to Christians' hearts, in "testifying to our spirit" (Rom. 8:16).⁹¹

9. *Cantate* (John 16:5-15)

This pericope is the most complete Gospel selection devoted to the Holy Spirit. These verses review what other texts said of the Paraclete and add a new work: as "exposer, convictor, convincer" of the world (vv. 8-11).

Luther delights in this text which elaborates the relation of Christ to the Spirit. Our summary will not review the ground common to other selections already treated, but center in what might be called the "negative" aspects of the Spirit's work, in which He lays the groundwork for the church's saving activity. As Luther expresses it, this reinforces the contention of this article that he draws the sharpest, most radical distinction between all that belongs to the "world," to nature, the realm of the flesh—and all that possesses the gift of the Holy Spirit.⁹²

"I have yet many things to tell you, but you cannot now bear them," says Christ in v. 12. For their understanding is still "fleshly" and they operate with worldly reason.⁹³ Only after the Spirit's bestowal following the Resurrection and again following the Ascension can they understand the strange message which condemns the world for the purpose of leading it to salvation.

The message in short is: *Summa ungnad ist sund, gerechtigkeit ist glaub, gericht ist das heilig creutzs*.⁹⁴ The world defines sin on legal lines,⁹⁵ but the Gospel's approach is more "occult," for it treats it Christocentrically. Denial of Christ is the ground sin, for which each is responsible.⁹⁶ And without faith one cannot please God; sin, too, is viewed *coram deo* and *coram hominibus*;

coram deo is what really matters, and this is seen entirely in the relation to Christ.⁹⁷ The Holy Spirit's message to the world concerning sin is this: The Christ on the cross is your Savior — what does not depend on Him condemns.⁹⁸

The world defines righteousness as the virtue which returns to one what is his⁹⁹ and is based on man's external efforts. Luther radically opposes this with a *mira justitia*, a strange or foreign righteousness. He, too, is stunned by the message he must preach: that Christianity can be described as a way of righteousness because Christ ascended to heaven! No wonder the world sees folly in this!¹⁰⁰

The world's judgment, thirdly, by the Spirit, Luther finds most interesting because of the apparent equation of world and prince of the world, or Satan.¹⁰¹ And the church must judge the whole world; this is the Spirit's "holy duty," to bring through the church the confrontation: either believe Christ or be damned!¹⁰² It will always seem incredible to the world that a carpenter of Nazareth on the cross defeated the world and its prince!¹⁰³

The world, of course, laughs that this message of judgment comes through common folk, paupers, Apostles.¹⁰⁴ This brings Luther once more in this pericope to discussion of external and internal Word. And again he faces something new, as Christ says, "I have yet many things to tell you."

This logion led Rome to conclude it could add and conceive new doctrines. But Luther calls this a perversion of the distinction between *multa* and *alia*, "many things" and "other things." The 1531 sermon is an essay on this subject which waxes sarcastic (*Juncker, seczt eyn bryl uff die naszen. Vil und anders leren ist nicht eyn ding*).¹⁰⁵ The church should preach "more" but never "other." It may use similitudes to amplify but not to add. (*Spiritus sanctus hat ein mas, wie weit er predigen sol, et non weyter.*)¹⁰⁶

These limits of content add nothing to the message of Christ and dare not subtract. This message and exactly this, says Luther, is the only basis on which the church can face the world to judge it — and to save it.

10. *Quasimodogeniti* (John 20:19-31)

The text deals with the bestowal of the Spirit as the disciples are gathered around the risen Lord. Unfortunately Luther does

not give us much enlargement on his view of the bestowal. But he does connect it to the power to forgive sins offered by the church, and in this lies interest for us.¹⁰⁷ The power to forgive, given with the Spirit in John 20:22-23, is the greatest man knows. Faced with sacerdotalism Luther urges on his hearers that they, the hearers, are the church and that they have a power given them and all Christians. The test is simply this: Does a man have the Holy Spirit? If he does, he has a lordly and kingly power—the power of forgiveness.¹⁰⁸ Without this power the church would be but human.

The *Quasimodogeniti* text, says Luther, is significant, not in that it forgives the sins of those who hear and accept the absolution, but in that it announces the power to do it for others; they have, in the Spirit, through the spoken Word, the very power of the resurrection.¹⁰⁹

IV. SUMMARY

He who would understand Luther's views of the work of the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier, or in connection with the Scriptures, or of His place in the Trinity, will be disappointed in these sermons (partly because very little textual possibility for such discussion is here). But the revelatory and comforting aspects of the church's life under the Spirit are brought to light in a fresh way, consistent with Luther's explanation of the Third Article of the Creed. Subsequent Biblical scholarship may give an exegetical insight Luther could not possess; but for preaching in the power and spirit of Pentecost we could do worse than be led via Luther to the Scriptural witness, a witness which for him, we have seen, can be centered around three poles in particular, here summarized:

1. When Luther preaches on those Gospel pericopes which contain references to the Holy Spirit, he consistently uses traditional creedal formulations. Thus he understands the Holy Spirit as a "He," the Third Person of the one Triune God, to whom the Scriptures witness. He would be opposed to any impersonal or purely immanental conception of the Spirit. At the same time he makes it clear that he is concerned with the work of the Spirit in the hearts of his hearers.

2. When Luther preaches on those Gospel pericopes which contain references to the Holy Spirit, he consistently and radically

separates the sphere of flesh from that of the Spirit. The former includes all that is anthropocentric, all that belongs to the sinful realm of the world, nature, reason, and senses, including the whole of man—even his soul, his noblest works and highest religious aspirations. The realm of the Spirit represents all that is theocentric. For man this comes about in the form of a new birth, new world, new nature and reason.

While he often speaks of man's role in believing and receiving the Holy Spirit, he makes clear that even this is a gift of the Spirit, a result of a strange, divine initiative which provides the condition for faith. This receives classic expression in Luther's explanation of the Third Article of the Creed: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him; but the Holy Ghost has called me."

3. When Luther preaches on those Gospel pericopes which contain references to the Holy Spirit, he consistently maintains that the internal witness of the Spirit in the heart of man is dependent on the external witness of the Word. This Word may be preached, read, written, or present in the visible Sacraments. Its content, opposed to legal righteousness, centers in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and is thus the mark of His church. The Holy Spirit follows the Word, testifying to man's own spirit, providing all that man by nature cannot possess. This receives classic expression in Luther's explanation of the Third Article of the Creed: "The Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts . . . even as He calls . . . the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith."

Chicago, Ill.

REFERENCES

1. Hodgson, Leonard, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (New York: Scribner's, 1944) will introduce the reader to this literature.
2. Erlangen Ausgabe, XXX, 148.
3. Annunciation (March 25) and Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24) fall on Sunday in 1556; the Visitation is July 2; Presentation, February 2.
4. The sermons are: May 31, 1523; May 22, 1524; June 11, 1525; May 27, 1526; June 7, 1528; May 23, 1529; June 4, 1531; May 26, 1532; June 8, 1533. The Roerer MSS are used except in the case of a published version parallel to Roerer for May 31, 1523, and the Nürnberg Codex for May 23, 1529.
5. Weimar Ausgabe, XI, 122 (1523).
6. W. A., XVII, I, 278 (1525); XXXIV, I, 508 (1531).

7. W. A., XII, 591 (1523).
8. W. A., XX, 422 (1526); XXXVII, 87 (1533).
9. W. A., XII, 589 (1523), published version.
10. W. A., XX, 414 (1526); XII, 588 (1523), published; XV, 567 (1524); XXIX, 386 (1529), Nürnberg.
11. W. A., XX, 414, 416 (1526); XXXVI, 186 (1532).
12. W. A., XI, 123 (1523); XXVII, 188 (1528); XX, 421 (1526); XXXIV, Part I, 508 (1531).
13. W. A., XI, 123 (1523); XX, 422 (1526); XXVII, 188 (1528).
14. W. A., XVII, I, 281 (1525).
15. W. A., XXVII, 194 (1528).
16. W. A., XXIX, 387 (1529) (Nürnberg).
17. W. A., XXIX, 386 (1529) (Nürnberg).
18. W. A., XV, 567 (1524).
19. W. A., XV, 568 (1524).
20. W. A., XII, 591 (1524), published version; XV, 568f. (1524); XVII, Part I, 282 (1525); W. A., XI, 123 (1523).
21. W. A., XV, 569 (1524); XX, 424 (1526); XXXIV, Part I, 505 (1531).
22. W. A., XXXIV, Part I, 510, 511 (1531).
23. The sermons of interest were preached from 1522 through 1525, and in 1528, 1531, 1532, 1534, 1538, 1539. The 1524 sermon was preached on March 19, because that year the Annunciation fell on Good Friday, and the 1532 sermon is dated March 24. All but two are from Roerer MSS.
24. W. A., XXXVI, 138 (1532); XLVII, 705 (1539); XXXVII, 337 (1534).
25. W. A., XXXVI, 142 (1532); W. A., XI, 72 (1532); XXXVI, 142 (1532); XLVI, 230 (1538); W. A., XLVII, 710 (1539).
26. W. A., XXXVI, 142 (1532).
27. W. A., XXXVI, 139—141 (1532).
28. W. A., XII, 458 (1523), from a published sermon.
29. Ibid.
30. W. A., XVII, Part I, 150 (1525).
31. W. A., XLVI, 230 (1538).
32. W. A., XVII, Part II, 399 (1522) (Roth's *Festpostille*).
33. W. A., XXXVI, 144 (1532).
34. W. A., XXVII, 77 (1528).
35. This section is concerned with sermons preached on this text from 1523 through 1529, and in 1531, 1533, 1535, 1538, 1539. All are dated July 2 except one of two in 1528 and the 1529 and 1535 sermons, which bear the date July 1. All but two are Roerer MSS.
36. W. A., XX, 450 (1526); XLVI, 472 (1538).
37. W. A., XLVI, 476 (1538).
38. W. A., XX, 451 (1526).
39. W. A., XXXIV, Part I, 564 (1531); XXIX, 449 (1529).
40. W. A., XX, 449 (1526).
41. W. A., XLVI, 474 (1538); XVII, Part II, 460 (1527) Roth's *Festpostille*.
42. W. A., XLVI, 475 (1538).
43. W. A., XXXVII, 92 (1533); XI, 141 (1523); XII, 608 (1523); XVII, Part II, 458 (1527), Roth; XX, 450 (1526); XLVII, 838 (1539).
44. W. A., XXXIV, Part I, 562 (1531).
45. W. A., XVII, Part II, 459 (1527), Roth; XXVII, 231 (1528); XVII, Part I, 321 (1525).
46. This portion is based on sermons of June 24, 1522 (2), 1523, 1525, 1528 (2), 1529, 1535 (2), 1539. One of the 1522 sermons is from Roth; the rest are from Roerer. One of the two in 1528 was preached June 23.

47. W. A., XLI, 338 (1535).
48. W. A., XVII, Part II, 441 (1522), Roth.
49. W. A., XLI, 336 (1535); W. A., XXIX, 430 (1529).
50. W. A., XVII, Part I, 288 (1525).
51. See the sermons preached on Feb. 2 in 1523, 1524, 1526, 1528, 1531, Roerer.
52. W. A., XI, 16 (1523); XX, 257 (1526).
53. W. A., XI, 16 (1523).
54. Ibid.
55. W. A., XX, 257 (1526); XXVII, 31 (1528).
56. W. A., XXVII, 31 (1528).
57. Ibid.
58. Only the following are of interest here: Feb. 17, 1521; Feb. 14, 1524; March 5, 1525 (in Roerer and published versions); and the undated 1528 *Winterpostille* of Roth.
59. W. A., XVII, Part II, 188 (1525), published version; W. A., XV, 450 (1524); W. A., XXI, 99 (1528), Roth's *Winterpostille*.
60. Sermons of May 27, 1520; May 28, 1520; May 24, 1523; May 15, 1524; June 4, 1525 (2); May 20, 1526; May 31, 1528; June 1, 1528; May 16, 1529; May 17, 1529 (2); May 1, 1535, are those of interest for this study.
61. Luther equates them in almost every instance, e.g., W. A., IX, 466 (1520): *Spiritus Sanctum efficacie paraciton*.
62. W. A., IX, 465 (1520).
63. W. A., XI, 113 (1523).
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. W. A., XI, 112, 114 (1523).
67. W. A., XI, 112 (1523).
68. W. A., XXIX, 356 (1529).
69. W. A., XXIX, 364, 365 (1529); W. A., XXVII, 164 (1528).
70. W. A., IX, 466 (1520).
71. W. A., XV, 565 (1524).
72. W. A., XVII, Part I, 264 (1525).
73. W. A., XI, 114 (1523).
74. W. A., XI, 112 (1523); XXVII, I, 5 (1528).
75. W. A., XV, 565 (1524); XVII, I, 269 (1525); XXIX, 364 (1529).
76. W. A., XV, 565 (1524).
77. W. A., XXIX, 365 (1529); W. A., IX, 467 (1520); XXVII, 155 (1528); XVII, I, 269 (1525); W. A., XXIX, 364 (1529); XX, 399 (1526); XI, 112 (1523).
78. W. A., XXIX, 366 (1529); W. A., IX, 466 (1520); XVII, I, 268f. (1525); XX, 400 (1526); the closing quotation is from W. A., IX, 466 (1520).
79. Roerer MSS for May 17, May 8, May 28, May 13, respectively, in the years from 1523 to 1526; May 9, 1529, May 12, 1532, and the published version of June 1, 1522.
80. W. A., XI, 108 (1523); XXIX, 339 (1529).
81. W. A., XV, 554, 555 (1524); X, Part III, 151 (1522).
82. W. A., XV, 558 (1524); XVII, Part I, 261 (1525).
83. W. A., XV, 555 (1524); XVII, I, 260f. (1525); W. A., XXXVI, 175 (1532).
84. Ibid., pp. 175, 176.
85. W. A., XI, 109 (1523); XV, 554 (1524); XVII, Part I, 260 (1525).
86. W. A., X, Part III, 150 (1522).
87. W. A., XI, 108 (1523); W. A., XV, 555 (1524).

88. W. A., XI, 108, 109 (1523); XX, 390 (1526); XXXVI, 176 (1532).
89. W. A., XXXVI, 177 (1532); XI, 109 (1523); XXIX, 339 (1529).
90. W. A., XI, 109 (1523); XV, 556 (1524); XXIX, 340 (1529).
91. W. A., XXIX, 339, 340 (1529); XX, 391 (1526).
92. See for Part IX the sermons of 1516 (Poach); May 18, 1522, published version; and April 24, 1524; May 14, 1525; May 17, 1531; April 24, 1535; May 19, 1538, all Roerer.
93. W. A., XV, 542 (1524); XVII, Part I, 243 (1525); XLVI, 375 (1538); X, Part III, 126 (1522), published version.
94. W. A., XI, 107 (1523).
95. W. A., IV, 695 (1516).
96. W. A., IV, 699 (1516); W. A., XXXIV, Part I, 363 (1531); XLI, 65 (1535); XLVI, 371f. (1538).
97. W. A., IV, 695 (1516); W. A., XI, 104 (1523).
98. W. A., XV, 543 (1524).
99. W. A., X, Part III, 125 (1522); W. A., IV, 696 (1516).
100. W. A., XVII, Part I, 245 f. (1525); XXXIV, I, 364 (1531).
101. W. A., XVII, Part I, 247 (1525).
102. W. A., XXXIV, Part I, 361 (1531); XLI, 64 (1535); XVII, Part I, 244 (1525); XV, 544 (1524).
103. W. A., XXXIV, Part I, 362, 365 (1531).
104. Ibid., p. 361 (1531).
105. Ibid., pp. 371—375 (1531).
106. W. A., XI, 108 (1523); XXXIV, Part I, 372 (1531).
107. For this subchapter see the sermons for April 27, 1522, published; April 12, 1523, Roerer and published forms; April 8, 1526; April 16, 1531; April 23, 1536, all in Roerer MSS.
108. W. A., X, Part III, 96 (1522), published version; XXXIV, Part I, 319 (1531).
109. Ibid., also XLI, 541 (1536); XII, 522 (1523), published version; XX, 367 (1526); XI, 96 (1523); XLI, 541 (1536).

FOR FURTHER READING

The most comprehensive sequence of sermons for one interested in further study of Luther's preaching on the Holy Spirit, especially as it is set against the background of other ideas, is that preached in 1523 (W. A., XI); others of interest are those of 1524, 1525, 1526, in Vols. XV; XVII, Part I; and XX.

Many of the familiar Luther studies of the twentieth century have begun to turn again with interest to his doctrine of the Holy Spirit and should be consulted. Only three entire works are devoted to this subject, however:

Otto, Rudolf, *Die Anschauung vom heiligen Geiste bei Luther*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1898. This has many Ritschlian presuppositions, tends to tie piety to the Law.

Prenter, Regin, *Creator Spiritus*, trans. John M. Jensen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1953). Prenter calls himself "diametrically opposed" to Otto's position. His book incorporates many of the insights of modern Scandinavian Luther research and is most rewarding reading.

Seeberg, Ernst, "Der Gegensatz zwischen Zwingli, Schwenckfeld, und Luther," in the *R. Seeberg-Festschrift*, I (1929). This essay centers its concern on the conception of the Holy Spirit as found in these authors.