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Table of Contents

The Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever: Jesus as Timekeeper William C. Weinrich	3
Then Let Us Keep the Festival: That Christ Be Manifest in His Saints D. Richard Stuckwisch	17
The Missouri Synod and the Historical Question of Unionism and Syncretism Gerhard H. Bode Jr.	39
Doctrinal Unity and Church Fellowship Roland F. Ziegler	59
A Light Shining in a Dark Place: Can a Confessional Lutheran Voice Still Be Heard in the Church of Sweden? Rune Imberg	81
Cultural Differences and Church Fellowship: The Japan Lutheran Church as Case Study Naomichi Masaki	93

The Christian Voice in the Civil Realm	
Gifford A. Grobien	115
Lutheran Clichés as Theological Substitutes	
David P. Scaer	131
Theological Observer	144
Go On	
Inaugural Speech for the Robert D. Preus Chair	
The Restoration of Creation in Christ:	
Essays in Honor of Dean O. Wenthe	
Incarnation as the Perfection of Creation	
Book Reviews	167
Books Received	186
Indices for Volume 78 (2014)	189

The Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever: Jesus as Timekeeper

William C. Weinrich

Let us begin by looking at three testimonies concerning time. Two come from Jewish sources, the third is Christian. In 2 Maccabees, we are told that the Syrian general, Nicanor, determined to attack Judas Maccabaeus on the Sabbath day. When certain Jews in his company urged him to give honor to that day “which he who sees all things has honored and made holy above [all other days],” Nicanor arrogantly demanded to know whether “there was in heaven a Sovereign [δυνάστης] who had commanded the keeping of the Sabbath.” To this the Jews responded, “It is the living Lord himself, the Sovereign in heaven, who ordered us to observe the seventh day.” To this Nicanor answered, “And I am a sovereign also, on earth, and I command you to take up arms and do the king’s business” (2 Macc 15:1-5).¹ In this agonistic context, two distinct times come into conflict, and these two times are the times of two different and distinct sovereigns. One time is that of the living God in heaven, and the other time is that of the earthly king. Moreover, these two times and the two corresponding powers require differing loyalties and differing behaviors. For the Jews, the time of the seventh day demands rest from the work of the earth. For Nicanor, there is no Sabbath rest; he is bound to the times of the earth and so is bound to the work of an earthly king.

The second text introduces us more directly to the central theme of our topic. It comes from Jewish rabbinic literature. Referring to the time of the Exodus and the month in which it was celebrated, this explanation is given: “When God chose his world, he appointed months and years therein, and when he chose Jacob and his sons, he appointed for them a new moon of redemption in which Israel were redeemed from Egypt and in which they are destined to be redeemed again, as it says: ‘As in the days of your coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things’ (Micah 7:15)” (*Rab. Exod.* 15.11).² In this interesting text the

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, English translations of the Septuagint and the New Testament are the author’s.

² *Exodus*, trans. Rabbi Dr. S. M. Lehrmann, in *Midrash Rabbah*, trans. and ed. Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (London: The Soncino Press, 1939, 1961), 173.

moons and years of the creation are contrasted with a “new moon of redemption.” What we must note, however, is that this “new moon of redemption” is not another time in the sequence of times; it is a time of redemption *in which* all of God’s redeeming acts subsist: “*in which* Israel were redeemed from Egypt and *in which* they are destined to be redeemed again.” Thus, there is a time that is filled by event and happening but which is not a mere event of history, for that event comes from God and is not bound to nor dependent upon the forces either of nature or of men. Moreover—and this is important—the “new moon of redemption” is a time of recollection of God’s past acts of salvation, which in turn presage and prefigure a future act of salvation. In the “new moon of redemption,” there is both remembrance and the expectation of hope and faith. In the “new moon,” past and future come together not so much as prophecy and fulfillment but as preliminary future and consummated past. The “new moon” is the time of God’s ultimate and eschatological purpose and so lies outside of or beyond the times of this world. The days of the week and the time of the new moon are distinct, for this time is not *of the week*; it is rather the consummation of the week.

The third text comes from one of the Easter/Paschal homilies of Gregory of Nyssa.³ Being a Christian writer, Gregory knows of that time “in which [Israel] is destined to be redeemed again.” It is the time of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Consider the Sabbath theology of the Christian. The true Sabbath rest, foretold in that Sabbath rest of God on the seventh day, is the rest of God whereby he initiates a new day:

You wonder at the sublime Moses, who by the power of knowledge apprehended the whole of God’s creation? See, you have the Sabbath of the first origin of the world being blessed; learn through that Sabbath that this Sabbath is the day of rest which God has blessed above all other days. For on this day the only-begotten God truly rested from all his works, having kept Sabbath in the flesh through the dispensation befitting death, and returning to what he was by his resurrection he raised again together with himself all that lay prostrate, becoming life and resurrection and sunrise and dawn and day for those in darkness and death’s shadow.⁴

Later in the homily Gregory reflects on the fact that the prophet Zechariah says that the day of redemption will be neither night nor day

³ Gregory of Nyssa, “On the Three-Day Period of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” in *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa*, Patristic Monograph Series, no. 9 (Cambridge, Mass.: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1981), 31–50.

⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, “On the Three-Day Period,” 31–32.

(Zech 14:7). Gregory quotes Ps 118:24, "This is the day which the Lord has made," and continues:

[This is the day] but different from the days made at the beginning of creation, by which time is measured, this is the beginning of another creation. For on this day God makes a new heaven and a new earth. . . . What heaven? The firmament of faith in Christ. What earth? I mean the good heart . . . the earth which drinks the rain which comes on it and ripens plentiful grain. In this creation pure living is the sun, the virtues are stars, transparent conduct is the air, the depth of the riches of wisdom and knowledge is the sea, good teaching and divine doctrines are herbage and plants, which the people of his pasture, that is God's flock, grazes on, the performance of the commandments is trees bearing fruit. In this [creation] is created also the true man who is made in the image and likeness of God. You see the kind of world of which "This day which the Lord has made" becomes the beginning; of which the prophet says that it is not a day like other days, nor a night like other nights.⁵

As did the rabbis in the *Midrash Rabbah*, Gregory distinguishes between the times given in creation and the time of redemption, which, to be sure, is a time but not a time among times. For Gregory, this new time is present now and experienced now. He speaks of the paschal events of Baptism and of the Eucharist and quite directly of those who have been baptized and participate in the Supper of Christ. For Gregory, the time of baptism is the time of the new birth, and participation in the Eucharist is participation in "the day which the Lord has made."

Such texts, both Jewish and Christian, could easily be multiplied. But let us back up and inquire after the basic and fundamental theological perspective that allows and demands such reflection as we have surveyed. In his book, *The Origins of History*, Herbert Butterfield argues that the Old Testament prophets were virtually unique in the ancient world in their understanding of time.⁶ The civilizations that surrounded them reckoned time according to the cycles of nature. Time, as it were, was located in the movement of the seasons, and so time consisted of a constant and never-ending repetition of growth and decay that characterized the natural cycle. In such a perspective, man too was but a feature of nature, given over to the natural cycle of life and death. Thus, man was imprisoned in a never-ending cycle of return and repetition that had neither purpose nor meaning. Not surprisingly, from such a conviction the quest for the

⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Three-Day Period," 34-35.

⁶ Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of History*, ed. Adam Watson (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 80-117.

philosophical life and for the life of God existed in the quest to escape the constraints and limitations of time and space. Within the sphere of Greek philosophy, this quest could assume the form of the immortality of the soul as a freedom from the corruptible body, or it could assume the more radical form of the annihilating conflagration, or *ἐκπύρωσις*, of all things at the end of each cycle of time, a view held by the Stoics.

How very different is the understanding of the Old Testament! Consider, for example, these two comments from the *Wisdom of Solomon* (LXX) concerning the *telos*, or divinely ordained purpose, of man: "God did not make death, nor does he delight in the destruction of the living. For he created all things that they might exist [εἰς τὸ εἶναι] and the generations of the world are full of health [σωτήριοι] and in them is no destructive poison" (Wis 1:13–14). And this: "God created man for incorruption [ἐπ' ἀφθαρσία], and made him in the image of his own character" [εἰκόνα τῆς ἰδίας ιδιότητος]" (Wis 2:23).

Several aspects of these assertions may be highlighted. First of all, God created with a purpose, and this purpose lay, so to speak, not only behind the creation as cause but precisely within creation itself as its goal and intent. This was, in fact, the essential claim made by the Christian assertion, elaborated especially by Irenaeus in the second century, that God made the world *ex nihilo*, "from nothing." The biblical text was that of Genesis: God spoke and it was as God had spoken it (see Gen 1:3; Ps 33:9). God made *ex nihilo*, that is, by his word and command. God's act of creation, therefore, was not merely the beginning of all things; it vested in creation itself—and here we speak especially of man—its intended end. "God created man *for incorruption*." The definition of man, therefore, includes man's goal: man *is* the creature intended for incorruption. This leads directly to the second aspect that we must mention. Unlike in cyclical notions of time, in the biblical perspective death is an alien and hostile intrusion into God's creation, not merely as a corrupting influence but as that which stultifies and threatens God's purpose for man. Sin and death call God's final intent for man into question: "Through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to him experience it" (Wis 2:24). Sin and death, as it were, reduce man to a mere creature of nature, caught and bound in the cycle of life and death, without purpose and without meaning.

Finally, and somewhat in summary, these texts from *Wisdom* claim that the existence of man stretches out toward a future goal. That is to say that the existence of man, precisely as that which has a future, is characterized by time. Man does not exist *in* time; rather, man is *temporal*. Man is not

essentially a natural phenomenon; he is a historical reality. But as a temporal, historical reality, man is given a life to live, and that life is to correspond to the will and intent of God, who made man. Man's own will and behavior is to be dedicated to and is to correspond to that end, which is the proper end of man. Not surprisingly, therefore, according to biblical understanding, when the true Man appears, the fullness of times has likewise come (see Matt 3:17; Gal 4:4). The eschatological end of all times is defined as the eschatological consummation of man.

Butterfield notes the historical consciousness that characterizes Old Testament summaries of Israel's existence by quoting from Deuteronomy 26. This is, as Butterfield puts it, "a kind of creedal statement"⁷ which was to be recited at the harvest festival when the first fruits were presented to the priest and placed before the altar:

A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. Then we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which You, O Lord, have given me. (Deut 26:5-10)

The offering of harvest fruit to the deity was a typical expression of the pagan worship of nature and its recurring cycle of the seasons. But as Butterfield notes, "the children of Israel associated [the harvest festival] with a unique event. It did not bind them to nature. It reminded them of their history."⁸ What, however, must be added to Butterfield's comment is this: the work of man and the fruits of his labors become the essential content of man's worship of God, and this precisely in view of God's promise that the land of milk and honey is the abode of his people. The sacrifice of man to God is man himself and all that constitutes his life.

As a temporal, historical being, man is given a life to live. In the Old Testament this life was exhibited by practice and habit that was in obedience to the statutes and commandments of God. Butterfield notes that when the question arose as to why Israel ought to observe the commandments, they did not resort to ethical discourse or philosophical

⁷ Butterfield, *The Origins of History*, 82.

⁸ Butterfield, *The Origins of History*, 82.

explanation. They appealed yet again to their history. When Moses delivered the commandments to the people, he is reported as saying:

When your son asks you in time to come, "What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules which the Lord our God has commanded you?" then you shall say to your son, "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day." (Deut 6:20-23)

The commandments of God are intimately connected with the promise of God concerning the land. They are not laid upon Israel as foreign elements that oppress and bind. They are rather given to Israel as the form of that life which is conformed to God's promise. The promise of the land to Abraham became especially associated with the Exodus, along with the giving of the Torah and the wilderness sojourn. It was this event, or these events, that substantiated that the promise of God would be fulfilled, even through the necessity of redemption from bondage and the destruction of Pharaoh. Butterfield summarizes:

It seemed that the whole history of the people had been a history based on the Promise. At some time or other, the Promise came to be regarded as a continuing thing; it represented the hope for the future, but it depended on the conduct of the people themselves, the fidelity to the covenant, the obeying of the commandments. All this implied a further bond, fastening men's minds on history, and connecting religion with history.⁹

When the holy writer commenced the story of Israel with the account of the creation, he confessed that the meaning of creation lay not within the natural cycles of seedtime and harvest but within the history of a people. Time stretched out toward the future, for time was not an empty vessel but was laden with meaning. It is important to note, however, that the meaning that filled the moments of time was determined by the *final* purpose of God. For the Hebrew mind, not the beginning but the end was decisive. Thus, already at the beginning God had promised the end, and the end was already in view: "Let us make man in our image and likeness"

⁹ Butterfield, *The Origins of History*, 87.

(Gen 1:26). The man made at the beginning was not yet man as he was to become. The apostle Paul makes the remarkable comment that Adam was “the type of the one who was to come [τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος]” (Rom 5:14). Adam was not the goal of creation; he was prophetic of the goal of creation. The same was true of Israel. As Butterfield noted, “the whole history of the people had been a history based on the Promise.” That is, the future (i.e., the promise) gave structure and significance to the history of Israel. The future, as it were, constantly intruded upon the events of Israel and, in doing so, moved Israel onward toward that very future. Israel was eschatologically determined, and her fulfillment lay beyond her own history.

We can see this quite clearly in the prophetic announcements concerning a future and final exodus, more glorious than the first. Two aspects are involved: memory and recollection of the past and expectation and hope of that promise that is yet to come. Consider, for example, Isa 51:9–11:

Awake, awake, put on strength,
 O arm of the Lord;
 awake, as in days of old,
 the generations of long ago.
 Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces,
 that pierced the dragon?
 Was it not you who dried up the sea,
 the waters of the great deep,
 who made the depths of the sea a way
 for the redeemed to pass over?
 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return
 and come to Zion with singing;
 everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
 they shall obtain joy and gladness,
 and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The final redemption of Israel will be a new Exodus, which is also depicted as a new creation. This final redemption will be everlasting and will be accompanied by joy and gladness, sorrow and sighing forever gone and never to return. Moreover, the new Exodus will not merely repeat the Exodus of old or be merely similar to it. The new Exodus will *surpass* the old and cause that old Exodus to be forgotten. The Jews of old left Egypt in great haste (Exod 12:39), but the new Exodus will not be in haste because it will be a triumphant march: “For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight, for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard” (Isa 52:12).

The worship of Israel was based upon such eschatological hopes. What had occurred in the past was recollected and celebrated *as* the foundation and image of a future event in which Israel would, finally, become true Israel. The fulfillment of Israel would at the same time be the consummation of all humanity. Creation will have reached its end, the goal set for it by God at the beginning. Consider, for example, the imagery behind the liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles, which celebrated the presence of God's glory in the tabernacle during the wilderness sojourn, the future ingathering of scattered Israel from the nations, and the resultant dwelling of God in the reconstructed, eschatological temple. The significant text is found in Zechariah:

On that day there shall be neither cold nor frost. And there shall be continuous day . . . not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light. On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his Name one. (Zech 14:6-9, RSV)

Although an agricultural harvest festival, Tabernacles had co-opted the natural season of harvest and made it into a celebration of a future event in which creation would come to its end in a never-ending day. Israel brought nature into the service of her liturgy of remembrance and expectation. "On that day" signifies a day unlike and beyond all days, a day of perpetual light, that is, a day of the knowledge of God and of obedience to his commandments. It will be a day of living waters, that is, of the forgiveness of sin and, hence, the arrival of the eschatological paradise. In addition, with the manifestation of Israel God himself is manifested, made known, acknowledged, and worshipped. The time of the eschatological fulfillment is the time of the manifestation both of Israel and of God, Israel as the people of God and God as the God of Israel. Hence, the temple would become the focus of Israel's eschatological worship.

Israel celebrated its redemptive history and its future hope through its festive liturgies—Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The early church retained these celebrations, while ascribing to them her conviction that the eschatological completion, expected by Israel, had in fact come in the coming of Jesus. This completion of the ancient expectations was not, however, a simple continuation from what had gone before. This completion entailed something radically new, not new in the sense of unexpected, although that is true as well, but new in the sense that the old did not contain the new in itself and so had no capacity to bring the new forth. The

apostle Paul gives expression to this discontinuous continuity of the old with the new: "Even though we regarded Christ according to the flesh [i.e., as a descendent of Abraham], we now no longer regard [him in that way]. So that if anyone be in Christ, [he is] a new creation; the old things have passed away, behold, the new things have come" (2 Cor 5:16–17). The "old things" [τὰ ἀρχαῖα] are the various institutions and festivals of the old covenant. These the Christians will no longer celebrate *as* do the Jews. Nonetheless, these the Christians will celebrate according to that newness which is Christ himself. The Orthodox liturgist, Alexander Schmemmann, once observed that while non-Jewish Christians might accept the Old Testament because they believe in the New, the "logic" of the early *Jewish-Christian* was quite otherwise:

They believed in the New because they had seen, experienced and perceived the fulfillment of the Old. Jesus was the Christ; the Messiah; the One in whom all the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled. They experienced Christianity as the beginning of the 'Lord's Day,' toward which the whole history of the chosen people was moving.¹⁰

Thus, there is a continuity, for the history of Israel and the cultic celebrations of its past are not replaced, abolished, or superseded. They yet exist and are celebrated. However, they now exist and are celebrated as that which has found its fulfillment and consummation. That to which they prophetically pointed has arrived. There is, moreover, a newness that cannot be fully explained and accounted for by reference to the Old. The "new things" of which Paul spoke have come wholly and exclusively in the coming of Jesus and, quite especially, in his death and resurrection: "Behold, I make all things new," says he who sits upon the throne [Ἴδὸν καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα] (Rev 21:5). While Jesus is the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, he is also the one sent from above who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born from the Virgin Mary. The eschatological fullness, therefore, which is Jesus himself, brings into present time that which is not of time. The eschatological completion of time does not arise from time; the consummation of history does not itself have historical causation, and so it is, as it were, a history beyond all history. As the prophet Zechariah proclaimed, "On that day, there shall be continuous day, not day and not night."

On the way to his death in the early second century, Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Christians of Magnesia: "If those who lived under the

¹⁰ Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, trans. Asheleigh E. Moorehouse (Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 59.

old order of things [ἐν παλαιαῖς πράγμασιν] have come to the newness of hope [εἰς καινότητα ἐλπίδος], no longer observing the Sabbath, but living according to the Lord's Day [κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες]—on which also our life rose up through him, indeed, through his death . . . how shall we live apart from him?" (Ign. *Mag.* 9:1).¹¹ Ignatius gives expression to the Christian conviction that "to live according to the Lord's Day" is to live a life whose principle and reality lies within history but is not mere history. For the early church the Lord's Day was not a Christian equivalent of the Jewish Sabbath. The Sabbath was the day of God's rest after the creation of the world. In observing the Sabbath the Jew participated in the rest of God and thereby acknowledged that the world created by God was indeed good, even as God said it was. Therefore, "the Sabbath sanctions the whole natural life of the world unfolding through the cycles of time, because it is the divinely instituted sign of the correspondence of the world to God's will and purpose."¹² Yet this world ordered to God's purposes was also the scene of sin and death. In view of this woeful situation, the Sabbath rest assumed a distinctly penultimate character. The Sabbath as the final day of the week of creation lay nonetheless *within* the old aeon, which must pass away. Thus, the Sabbath rest was prophetic of another Sabbath rest, which would be the sign of that new creation in which all of humanity would be redeemed.

That is why Ignatius says that those who have come into "the newness of hope" no longer observe the Sabbath. To observe the Sabbath would be to fall again under the sign of the old order whose end is death and corruption. According to the time of Christ's passion, the Sabbath was the day of his rest in the tomb, "the day which completed his task within the limits of the 'old aeon.'"¹³ Christ did not rise from the dead on the Sabbath but on "the first day of the week" [μία σαββάτων], the day that Ignatius called "the Lord's Day" and that came also to be called "the eighth day" because it lay outside the boundaries of the seven-day week of creation. Here, too, we see what I have earlier termed the "discontinuous continuity" with the Old Testament celebrations. Nothing in the old dispensation possessed the capacity to effect the resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of Christ from the dead was a work of God, a work of God alone, and could only be a work of God.

¹¹ *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, ed. J. B. Lightfoot, J. R. Harmer, and Michael W. Holmes, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 154–155.

¹² Schmemmann, *Introduction*, 60.

¹³ Schmemmann, *Introduction*, 78.

In the Gospel of John, the works of Jesus on the Sabbath were miracles of healing, that is, events foretelling the new creation of his resurrection. In the first Sabbath miracle, Jesus heals the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda. The language is replete with the terminology of new creation and the accompanying new life of discipleship: "Jesus said to him, 'Arise [ἔγειρε], take your pallet and walk. And straightway the man became whole [ἐγένετο ὑγιής]" (John 5:8-9). The Jews accuse the man of breaking the Sabbath, but he replies to them, "He who made me whole [ὁ ποιήσας με ὑγιῆ] said to me, 'Take your pallet and walk'" (John 5:11). In the ensuing exchange with the Jews, Jesus expressly invokes the theology of Sabbath: "My Father works until now, and I also am working" (John 5:17). The Jews understand well the implications of Jesus' words. The healing of the paralytic is a sign of the new Sabbath rest of the new creation in which the new obedient Israel will be manifested. That work only God can effect, and so they accuse Jesus of making himself equal to God [ἴσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ] (John 5:18).

The second Sabbath miracle in the Gospel of John is the healing of the man born blind. When the disciples inquire whether the man's blindness is due to sin, Jesus again explicitly invokes ideas of the Sabbath and of the new Sabbath it presages. Neither the man nor his parents have sinned. Rather, the situation exists "in order that the works of God might in him become manifest" (John 9:3). Then Jesus says, "It is necessary that we [namely, the Father and Jesus] work the works of him who sent me while it is day. The night comes when no one can work" (John 9:4). As we learn later, the night is the time of betrayal and of Jesus' death. It is the end of all things, and as the end it is also the time of the eschatological renewal. Jesus then effects an act by which the new Sabbath is manifested. He makes clay from his spittle and "christens" [ἐπέχρισεν] the eyes of the man with the clay (John 9:6). Then he says to the man, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." And the man went away and washed himself and returned seeing (John 9:7). It is a baptism scene depicted as the creation of a new Adam made from the clay of the earth.

The time in which salvation is effected by God has come. In the work of Jesus the new creation appears, as does the eschatological Israel of prophetic promise. Jesus brings, as Paul puts it, "the fullness of the time" [τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου] (Gal 4:4). This "fullness of the time," however, is not another time of times. It possesses a content both paschal and Pentecostal (i.e., of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost):

When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that *we* might receive the adoption of sonship. And because

you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying "Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:4-6; emphasis added)

For the first Christians, the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist instantiated the promised time of salvation and renewal and, thus, were the celebrations of the new eschatological Sabbath. Through Baptism, one entered into the new Israel of Christ by water and the Spirit; it was the new purifying path through the Red Sea of sin, death, and the devil. In the Eucharist, the new freedom of sonship given and received in baptism was repeatedly recalled and celebrated at the table of the heavenly Father. It is not incidental that the Lord's Prayer addressed to "our Father, who art in heaven" was the prayer of the new Israel created in the waters of baptism. In these sacraments, the death and resurrection of Christ, in themselves singular events of the past, were recognized and acknowledged to be the eschatological fullness of the time. By them and in them, that which is above time and not determined by time, namely, the will of God that man should be incorruptible and have eternal life, becomes itself event and so can be experienced by man and lived by him. "The Kingdom of God has entered into the world, becoming the new life in the Spirit given by Him as life within Himself."¹⁴ The life of the new creation has brought the future of God's redemption into the present and has revealed that time by which all times and moments are to be measured and evaluated. Moreover, this life of the new aeon is not pure spirit. It is manifested and experienced in the liturgical *events* of Baptism and the Eucharist through which the new Israel, the church, is manifested. Thus, the church is called to baptize and to administer the Supper, not as things the church is commanded to do and so does as a work, but as that in which the church subsists and through which the church is manifested as the people of God, participants in the coming of God the Redeemer, and recipients of the promise foretold by the prophets but made present in the person of Jesus, the incarnated Son of the Father. The sacraments are the actualizations of the new aeon in the old. Through them, the church, the community of the re-created, lives in the world of time but as the true citizens of the heavenly city. Lived in faith, hope, and love, the fullness of the time remains in this age "hidden" in Christ. It will, however, become visible for all to behold at the coming again of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. Then what is beheld and received and experienced at the table of the Lord will be revealed:

You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a

¹⁴ Schmemmann, *Introduction*, 72.

judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. (Heb 12:22-24, RSV)

When the writer of Hebrews claims that “Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8), he does not make an ontological statement about the eternity of Jesus as true God. He states, rather, that in the repetition of the Supper he who *said*, “Take, eat. This is my body given for you. Take, drink, this is the blood of the new covenant,” is he who even now *says*, “Take, eat. This is my body given for you.” And so, in the fullness of time we are bold to pray:

O God, the Father, the fountain and source of all goodness, who in loving-kindness sent your only-begotten Son into the flesh, we thank You that for His sake You have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament, and we ask You not to forsake Your children but always to rule our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that we may be enabled constantly to serve You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 166.