

The Study Guide
21 June Anno Domini 2001
for
The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding
by Michael L. McCoy (1998)

Setting the Stage:

A Work in Progress

This study guide is intended to be of assistance and edification to the individual reading the book, the teacher overseeing a class discussion, and/or the member of the same body. It is certainly not “the last word” on anything, but rather is a “work in progress.” This study guide was originally posted on 21 June 2001 and the latest date of revision will be shown in the block at the top of this page. The original study guides was 68 pages. You are invited to email comments and suggestions for additions, deletions and/or corrections to me. Especially welcome are quotations from other writings ... works similar to what you see in the following pages with as wide a variety of genre, culture, author and times as possible. Let this be your (singular and plural) invitation to be a part of this work where additions are encouraged.

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The quotations of the works are included for at least two reasons: 1.) to stimulate thinking, and 2.) to promote reading of the work quoted.

“Without knowledge of literature pure theology cannot at all endure, just as heretofore, when letters have declined and lain prostrate, theology, too, has wretchedly fallen and lain prostrate; nay, I see that there has never been a great revelation of the Word of God unless He has first prepared the way by the rise and prosperity of languages and letters, as though they were John the Baptists. ... Certainly it is my desire that there shall be as many poets and rhetoricians as possible, because I see that by these studies, as by no other means, people are wonderfully fitted for the grasping of sacred truth and for handling it skillfully and happily. ... Therefore I beg of you that at my request (if that has any weight) you will urge your young people to be diligent in the study of poetry and rhetoric.”

Martin Luther, *Letter to Eoban Hess*, 29 March 1523.

Perspective

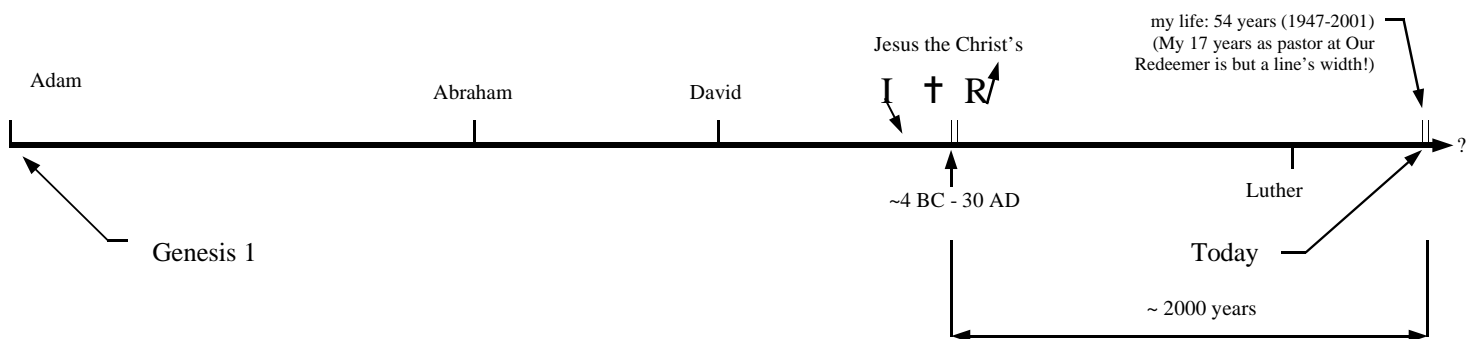
Secular History: Since the 1960s our place in history has become increasingly blurred. The fast-pace of our day-to-day routine, the disconnection of the generations, the breaking-up of the family, the changing philosophy of education, the disposable mentality of society, the isolation of the individual, the focus on *me*, the attempts to fulfill felt needs, the demand for rights without responsibilities, disrespect for authority, failure to serve, as well as the on-going influence of the old adam and the evil one, have combined to dull our understanding of history and heritage. To demonstrate the point, consider how many generations back you are able to recount the history of your family, versus what the African tribeswoman or the Australian bushman might be able to relay.

Sacred History: Since secular man enters the sanctuary and attends voters' meetings, the effects and influences of the world sets the agenda for the Church and thus, her history, is obscured. The historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation, the trashing of the historic liturgy, the replacement of the theology of the cross with the theology of glory, the changing hymnody based upon pragmatic and/or emotional reasons, the poison of subjectivism, the demand to be entertained, the loss of adequate, on-going catechesis, disrespect for authority, failure to walk together in doctrine and practice, as well as the on-going influence of the old adam and the evil one, have combined to dull our understanding of history and heritage. To demonstrate the point, answer these questions – who was the first pastor of your church? – when did your church begin?

Parishioner: With such blurring of history, the Christian is often unaware of his or her place in the church. Thus many, when asked “when did your church begin?”, might reply with something like: “It began in 1921 though the church was not built until 1926.” That is why the faithful at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church here in Emmett, Idaho hear that their Church began in the Garden of Eden, and that each one of them occupies a place and is a part of the Church’s history. That is one of the main perspectives that *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding* attempts to convey to the reader who is in the Church.

Pastor: With all that has been reported to this point, it is no wonder that many pastors have lost (or never really understood) the historical perspective of their office. The expectations, both within and without, abound and include the pressure to be a CEO instead of a pastor, a church growther instead of a Word sower, a lone ranger instead of a brother of the cloth, a hireling instead of a shepherd, an administrator of the congregation’s business instead of a steward of the mysteries, a counselor instead of a confessor. That is why the first pastor of the Church is Pastor Adam for he was entrusted with the Word and called to share it with the Church, beginning with Eve. This is the other primary perspective that *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding* attempts to communicate to the reader who is the man called to be a pastor in the Church.

Timeline: In order to help understand the historical perspective I constructed and referred to a timeline throughout the months that this adult class was taught. Four bright disks were threaded on a thirty-foot, black cord that extended from one side of the room to the other. At one end is the “Genesis 1:1” disk and at the other end is the “Today” disk. The other disks are placed according to scale. For example, ...



Before the Beginning

Now, since we are familiar with one timeline, let's try another. Imagine that we had the assignment of putting the Holy Scriptures in a timeline. You might think that a chronological Bible would have as its first verse, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1)*. However, after being in the Word and with some thought as we progress in our reading, we would come to realize that there would be other verses in the Bible that would come before *In the beginning*, and among them verses from the last book in the Holy Writ, Revelation!

So let's take a quick peek at a few of them. Included among the timeless passages occupying a place in the first chapter certainly are the enduring words of the eternal Son of God, *before Abraham was, I AM (John 8:58)*. This is Jehovah Jesus Who *was destined before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20)* and is *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8 KJV)*. The Church gladly joins Moses in a confession to and about the LORD God, *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God (Psalm 90:1)*. Emmanuel included you in His High Priestly Prayer when He petitioned the One Who sent Him, *Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast give Me, may be with Me where I am, to behold My glory which Thou hast given Me in Thy love for Me before the foundation of the world (John 17:24)*.

The LORD God - Father, Son, Holy Ghost - determined the plan of salvation before the creation of the universe and even the creation of time itself. That means that God knew exactly what would happen before, during and after the six days of creation. Yahweh foreknew the heavenly rebellion of Satan, the entrance of the Evil One into the Garden of Eden, the original sin of Adam and the sins of every human being who ever has lived, who is now living or who ever will live. Still, based upon the Scriptures, we believe, teach and confess that the LORD neither willed nor wills any of the awful events or sins mentioned in the previous sentence.

What God did foreknow, will and determine to accomplish was the plan of salvation. In the eternal council of God, the LORD determined that the Son of God would be the Savior Who would be incarnate by the Holy Ghost in the womb of a virgin daughter of Eve. Jesus is the Word sent by the Father to be our Redeemer.

- ◆ In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton wrote what he imagined as an address between the Father and the Son after the fall of Lucifer and before the fall of Adam.

“Only begotten Son, seest thou what rage
Transports our Adversary? Whom no bounds
Prescribed, no bars of Hell, nor all the chains
Heaped on him there, nor yet the main abyss
Wide interrupt can hold; so bent he seems
On desperate revenge, that shall redound
Upon his own rebellious head. And now
Through all restraint broke loose he wings his way
Not far off Heaven, in the precincts of light,
Directly towards the new-created World,
And man there placed, with purpose to assay
If him by force he can destroy, or worse,
By some false guile pervert; and shall pervert;
For man will hearken to his glozing lies,
And easily transgress the sole command,
Sole pledge of his obedience; so will fall

He and his faithless progeny. Whose fault?
 Whose but his own? Ingrate, he had of me
 All he could have; I made him just and right,
 Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
 Such I created all the ethereal powers
 And spirits, both them who stood and them who failed;
 Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
 Not free, what proof could they have given sincere
 Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,
 Where only what they needs must do, appeared,
 Not what they would? What praise could they receive?
 What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
 When will and reason (reason also is choice)
 Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled,
 Made passive both, had served necessity,
 Not me. They therefore as to right belonged,
 So were created, nor can justly accuse
 Their Maker, or their making, or their fate,
 As if predestination overruled
 Their will, disposed by absolute decree
 Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
 Their own revolt, not I. If I foreknew,
 Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
 Which had no less proved certain unforeknown.
 So without least impulse or shadow of fate,
 Or aught by me immutably foreseen,
 They trespass, authors to themselves in all,
 Both what they judge and what they choose; for so
 I formed them free, and free they must remain,
 Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change
 Their nature, and revoke the high decree
 Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained
 Their freedom; they themselves ordained their fall.
 The first sort by their own suggestion fell,
 Self-tempted, self-depraved; man falls deceived
 By the other first; man therefore shall find grace,
 The other none. In mercy and justice both,
 Through Heaven and Earth, so shall my glory excel,
 But mercy first and last shall brightest shine.”

Paradise Lost (1667) by John Milton (1608-1674)

Pondering all these things ...

- ◆ In light of what you have just read from *Paradise Lost*, consider the following three definitions:

Grace is that God gives us what we don't deserve.
 Mercy is that God does not give us what we deserve.
 Peace is knowing both God's Mercy and Grace.

- ◆ Liturgical Note __: Do you recall these words often heard at the beginning of a sermon:

“Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.”

- ◆ Decision theology (“I have made a decision for Christ” - “I have accepted Jesus into my heart” - etc.) is false doctrine. Think about this question and then read the quotation that follows. “Does my decision in time, trigger God’s election of me in eternity?”

At the very outset we must carefully note the difference between God’s eternal foreknowledge and the eternal election of his children to eternal salvation. For the fact that God sees and knows everything before it happens - what we call God’s foreknowledge - extends to all creatures, good and evil. He sees and knows in advance all that is or shall be, all that happens or will happen, both good or evil, since all things, present or future, are manifest and present to God, as it is written, *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father’s will (Matt. 10:29). Again, Thine eyes beheld my unformed substance, in thy book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them (Ps. 139:16). And again, I know your sitting down and your going out and coming in, and your raging against me (Isa. 37:28).*

On the other hand, the eternal election of God or God’s predestination to salvation does not extend over both the godly and the ungodly, but only over the children of God, who have been elected and predestined to eternal life “before the foundation of the world was laid,” as St. Paul says, “Even as he chose us in him, he destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:4,5).

God’s foreknowledge (*praescientia*) sees and knows in advance the evil as well, but not in such a way as though it were God’s gracious will that it should happen. To be sure, he sees and knows before hand whatever the perverse and wicked will of the devil and of men will attempt and do. But even in wicked acts and works God’s foreknowledge operates in such a way that God sets a limit and measure for the evil which he does not will - how far it is to go, how long it is to endure, and when and how he will interfere with it and punish it. For the Lord God governs everything in such a way that it must redound to the glory of his divine name and the salvation of his elect, and thereby the ungodly are confounded.

The source and cause of evil is not God’s foreknowledge (since God neither creates nor works evil, nor does he help it along and promote it), but rather the wicked and perverse will of the devil and of men, as it is written, “Israel, thou hast plunged thyself into misfortune, but in me alone is thy salvation” (Hos. 13:9). Likewise, “Thou art not a God who delights in wickedness” (Ps. 5:4).

God’s eternal election, however, not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect, but by God’s gracious will and pleasure in Christ Jesus it is also a cause which creates, effects, helps, and furthers our salvation and whatever pertains to it. Our salvation is based on it in such a way that “the gates of Hades” are not able to do anything against it (Matt. 16:18), as it is written, “No one shall snatch my sheep out of my hand” (John 10:28), and again, “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48).

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Election (1577)

Thus, coinciding with *In the beginning created the heaven and the earth*, would be ... *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made by Him, without Him was not anything made that was made (John 1:1-3). And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all His work which He had done in creation (Genesis 1:31–2:3).*

Before the eternal Eighth Day part of the “host” rebelled in heaven, namely, *the angels that did not keep their own position but left their dwelling place (Jude 6)*, that is, the devils led by Satan fought against the LORD and His Anointed by casting doubt upon the Word of the LORD.

Pondering all these things ...

- ◆ Read Genesis 3:1-7 and note the following:
 - ___ Satan is a preacher of doubt - *Did God really say?*
 - ___ the progression of the evil argument (doubt, lie, temptation)
 - ___ Where was Adam during this evil progression? (v. 6)
- ◆ The Devil says “*For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*” How do we learn what we “know”; or in other words, what are the two ways that we learn? How does our knowing of good and evil differ from God’s knowing of good and evil? Perhaps the following, written by a brilliant theologian named Dorothy Sayers, will help:

The fall of Man, we know a little more about from Scripture. It happens rather differently, because man is not a pure intelligence, but partly material, and it is his nature to develop in time and space and grown gradually into the life of Heaven. Therefore his knowledge cannot be purely intellectual, but has to be gained by experience. He is created good, in a good world; but Satan suggests to him that there is a different way of knowing reality -- it can be know not only as good, but also as evil. God, says Satan, knows it both ways; if Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, they also will know like God. Satan, however, carefully omits to point out that God can "know" evil purely as an intellectual possibility, without experiencing it or calling it into existence; but that Man, if he is to know it at all, must know it, as he knows everything else, by experience. Adam and Eve, intoxicated by the idea of being "as gods", disregard all warnings and eat; they have their desire, and know evil.

Introductory Papers on Dante (1953) Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957).

- ◆ Now go back and read Genesis 2:7-25, putting the following in chronological order:
 - ___ the authority to name the animals
 - ___ the stewardship of the Word
 - ___ the creation of the woman
 - ___ the stewardship of the Garden
- ◆ In view of your sequence above, and keeping chronological order, should it be ...
 - ... “Church and Ministry” or “Ministry and Church”?
- ◆ By the way, we are able to answer the question, “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?”
- ◆ Read Genesis 3:8-13 and pay particular attention to the phrase “*the presence of the LORD God.*” This is a major theme throughout the Scriptures. The Hebrew phrase literally means, “the face of the LORD God.” Adam and Eve removes themselves from before the LORD and hid from Him Who is everywhere and Who knows all things. Consider what the feelings are of the husband who has done something terribly wrong and says to a friend concerning his wife, “I can’t face her right now.” Or muse on the disobedient child who, rather than “facing up” to the situation, runs off and hides in the closet.
- ◆ Liturgical Note __: Finally, fallen man seeks to depart from the presence of the LORD while the LORD seeks to have man bought back and brought back - to be restored that he might be reconciled with his neighbor

and together they sing the *Venite* in the Church's liturgy ...

*O come, let us sing unto the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation!
Let us come into His Presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms (Psalm 95:1-2).*

Since Adam did not wish to confess his folly, God came down to question Eve and said to her, "What is this that you have done?" Eve too, instead of making supplication with her tears and bearing the fault herself so that mercy might take hold of both her and her husband, responded by saying not "The serpent counseled or seduced me" but "The serpent deceived me and I ate."

When the two of them had been questioned and were both found to be wanting in remorse or true contrition, God went down to the serpent not to make inquiry but to render punishment. For where there is opportunity for repentance, it would be right to inquire, but to one who is a stranger to repentance, judgment is fitting.

Commentary on Genesis (?) Ephrem the Syrian (306-373)

Thus we come to Genesis 3:14 and the place where *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding* commences.

Chapter 1 – Confrontations and Consequences

Go ahead and read the first chapter, pages 9-16. Now address the following in your personal meditations or in class discussions.

- ◆ How soon before the Word is heard? Is it Law (condemnation) or Gospel (consolation) ?
- ◆ On pages 9-10 the Devil is confronted and the consequences are carried out.
- ◆ Begin keeping track of the characters in the story. For example, Footstomper is the Violator while Headbanger is the Bridegroom. These two names, Footstomper and Headbanger, are not derived from certain music forms (like Irish clogging and American Heavy Metal ☺), but from Genesis 3:15. Are you able to identify them in this cardinal verse?
- ◆ Genesis 3:15 is the First Promise of the Redeemer, the One Who would buy the world back from sin, death and the Devil. It is the Word spoken to Satan. Adam and Eve heard this Word of Gospel and they were called to hear this Word and to trust in the promised Seed of the Woman ... that is, to believe in the Savior.

Reverting to the Old Testament, we see even there what the character of the teaching of Christ is. We read in Gen. 3, 15: "It [the Woman's Seed] shall bruise thy head." What is the import of these words? It is this: The Messiah, the Redeemer, the Savior is not to come for the purpose of telling us what we are to do, what works we are to perform in order to escape from the terrible dominion of darkness, sin, and death. These feats the Messiah is not going to leave for us to accomplish, but He will do all that Himself. "*He shall bruise the serpent's head,*" that means nothing else than this, that He shall destroy the kingdom of the devil. All that man has to do is to know that he has been redeemed, that he has been set free from his prison, that he has no more to do than to believe and accept this message and rejoice over it with all his heart. If the text were to read: "He shall save you," that would not be so comforting; or if it read: "You must believe in Him," we should be at a loss to know what is meant by this faith. This Protevangelium, this First Gospel in Genesis, was the fountain from which the believers in the Old Testament drew their comfort. It was important for them to know: "There is One coming who will not

only tell us what we must do to get to heaven. No, the Messiah will do all Himself to bring us there.” Now that the rule of the devil has been destroyed, anything that I must do cannot come into consideration. If the devil’s dominion is demolished, I am free. There is nothing for me to do but to *appropriate* this to myself. That is what Scripture means when it says, “Believe.” That means, Claim as your own what Christ has acquired.

The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel (1884-5) C.F.W. Walther (1811-1887).

- ◆ The First Promise is Incarnational in that the Savior will be the Seed of the Woman and we behold the Word of Isaiah 7:14; Galatians 4:4 and 1 John 1:1. Indeed, here we hear the first echo of Luke 24:36-43.

The trend of good is always towards Incarnation. But, on the other hand, those refined thinkers who worship the Devil, whether in the swamps of Jamaica or the *salons* of Paris, always insist upon the shapelessness, the wordlessness, the unutterable character of the abomination.

The Mystagogue (1911) G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936).

- ◆ Liturgical Note __: A part of the individual, devotional life of the pious and the corporate, liturgical life of the Church is the Lord’s Prayer. The last petition, if accurately translated from the Greek, would be: *but deliver us from the Evil One*. How does this change your thoughts during as you pray this petition?

He has therefore, in His work of recapitulation, summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who had at the beginning led us away captives in Adam, and trampled upon his head, as thou canst perceive in Genesis that God said to the serpent, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; He shall be on watch for thy head, and thou on watch for His heel.” For from that time, He who should be born of a woman, from the Virgin, after the likeness of Adam, was preached as keeping watch for the head of the serpent. This is the Seed of which the apostle says in the Epistle to the Galatians, “that the law of works was established until the Seed should come to whom the promise was made.” This fact is exhibited in a still clearer light in the same Epistle, where he thus speaks: “But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman.” For indeed the enemy would not have been fairly vanquished, unless it had been a man [born] of a woman who conquered him. For it was by means of a woman that he got the advantage over man at first, setting himself up as man’s opponent. And therefore does the Lord profess Himself to be the Son of man, comprising in Himself that original man out of whom the woman was fashioned, in order that, as our species when down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one; and as through a man death received the palm [of victory] against us, so again by a man we may receive the palm against death.

Against Heresies (~185) Irenæus (~130-200)

- ◆ On page 11 of *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding*, the Serpent is dispatched from through the Portal and into the land on the other side. The next truth introduced is that of repentance, namely in the words, “turn back to me.” Is repentance something the individual does or is repentance God’s work? Check Acts 11:18 and 2 Timothy 2:25-26.

[Note: What the Scripture declare, life often demonstrates. The author, while as pastor, has seen this in two particular individuals. A comment heard from the first, a month or so after the final step in Church discipline, is reported: “I cannot repent.” He was correct. The other was an individual caught in a public sin in the holy place was given the opportunity to say, or even to write in a note, “I sinned. I am sorry. Please forgive me.” He was and, as far as is known, remains incapable of repenting.]

[Raskolnikoff while in prison] Thus his shame arose not from his chains: his pride was bitterly wounded -- in fact, he was ill from wounded pride. How happy he would have been to reproach

himself; then he could have endured everything -- even the shame and dishonor. But, although he severely examined himself, he failed to find any specially dreadful cause in his past life, except a silly **error**, which might have happened to any man. What principally humiliated him was that he, Raskolnikoff, should be so utterly lost through an error, the consequences of which he must submit to if he wished for a moment of calmness.

Crime and Punishment (1866) Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881)

- ◆ Adam and Eve attempted to cover their guilt and shame by their own doing - by sewing fig leaves into aprons. They were not covered in God's eyes and they knew it. Their efforts only made the situation worse. They needed a cover that only God could provide. On pages 11 and 12 of the story, the absolution is announced to the Woman and signified in the white robe from the snow leopard. *And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them (Genesis 3:20)*. The Gospel is Incarnational - it is also Sacrificial - it is also Substitutionary. An innocent stand-in would be required to shed its blood and give its life in order for the cover to be acceptable. The sacrifice points to and foreshadows the Sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God and the Seed of the Woman.
- ◆ The white cloak from the snow leopard is the Church's wedding dress placed upon her shoulders by the Bridegroom, that is, by Jesus the Christ.

The Church's one foundation, Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is His new creation, By water and the Word.
From heav'n He came and sought her, To be His holy bride,
With His own Blood He bought her, And for her life He died.

The Church's One Foundation (1866) Samuel J. Stone

- ◆ It is sufficient to cover the sins of all of the Church's children of all times and places.

These are the two chief works of God in men, to terrify and to justify and quicken the terrified. One or the other of these works is spoken of throughout Scripture. One part is the law, which reveals, denounces, and condemns sin. The other part is the Gospel, that is, the promise of grace granted in Christ. This promise is repeated continually throughout Scripture; first it was given to Adam, later to the patriarchs, then illumined by the prophets, and finally proclaimed and revealed by Christ among the Jews, and spread by the apostles throughout the world. For all the saints were justified by faith in this promise, not by their own attrition or contrition.

These two parts also appear in the lives of the saints. Adam was rebuked and terrified after his sin; this was contrition. Then God promised grace and said there would be a Seed that would destroy the kingdom of the devil, death, and sin! This was the offer of the forgiveness of sins.

and,

Even though the Law does not teach the free forgiveness of sins, the patriarchs (Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc.) knew the promise of the Christ, that for His sake God intended to forgive sins, they knew that our works could not pay so high a price. Therefore they receive free mercy and the forgiveness of sins by faith, just as the saints in the New Testament. ... Therefore the patriarchs, too, were justified not by the Law but by the promise and faith. ... This is how God wants to be known and worshiped, that we accept His blessings and receive them because of His mercy rather than because of our own merits. This is the greatest consolation in all afflictions.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531)

- ◆ Pages 13-15 are some of the most important in the book. Adam's sin is the historic moment of the Fall. Read Romans 5:12-21 and hear of the first Adam's transgression of the Law and the second Adam's perfect

obedience to the Law. Adam's sin is horrific. He had been entrusted with the stewardship of the Word and expected to proclaim it (which he had done as Eve recounts). When Adam ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the fruit "lodged in his throat." Thus, it is called an Adam's Apple and not only did it stick in his craw, it also stands for the truth that Adam did not defend the Woman by speaking the Word. Choked with disobedience and pride, Adam remained silent when the two or three were gathered, even though he was called to preach the Word and defend the congregation under his care.

- ◆ Liturgical Note __: The robe from the wool of the black sheep is the Office of the Public Ministry of the Word. The placement of the chain stole is the Call and the qualified man's Ordination is an observed day in the Divine Service of the Church. The man, though still sinful and sinner, remains the one to receive such a Call and hold the Office. What does the following mean as the Bridegroom speaks to the man?

"You are restored and covered, but not because you wear the black robe. Remember that. Rather, what I have given to the Bride is also meant for you. The white cloak indicates your restoration too."

The man began to feel a mild itching wherever the black robe touched his skin. He squirmed and asked, "What is this sensation I feel?"

The Bridegroom replied, "The black robe should never be too comfortable on you. ..."

(page 14)

- ◆ The man is still the Bridegroom's bestman who has been placed in the office as a gift to the Bride. He is entrusted with the Word to proclaim to the Bride. She, to whom the binding and loosening Keys have been given, confers them to the bestman. Therefore, he is called to escort the Bride until the Lord Jesus terminates his Call.
- ◆ Liturgical Note __: In the Divine Service and in Private Confession and Absolution "the peculiar church power which Christ has given to His Church on earth to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, but to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent" is exercised. Therefore, we "believe that, when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, especially when they exclude manifest and impenitent sinners from the Christian congregation, and, again, when they absolve those who repent of their sins and are willing to amend, this is as valid and certain, in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself" [*Small Catechism* (1529) Martin Luther].

"Augustine writes: 'These keys He has given to His church in order that what they loose on earth might be loosed in heaven, and what they bind on earth might be bound in heaven.' This verdict of Augustine is confirmed by all the passages of Scripture in which the church is called Christ's bride and mistress of the house (Ps. 45:10; John 3:29; Ps. 68:13). Now as the keys are given by the master of the house to the mistress, so Christ, the Lord of the house of God, which is the church (Heb. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15), has given them to the church as to His bride. The ministers of the Word use them merely as stewards (1 Cor. 4:1) and servants in the name of the church."

John Gerhard (1582-1637) [As quoted in C.F.W. Walther's *Church and Ministry*, CPH, 1987, pages 284-285.]

Word and office do not admit of separation from each other without the office ceasing to be office. If the Word comes to naught, the office also ceases; if the proclamation of the Word ends, there can no longer be any talk of an office of the church. ... because the Word of the church is not a human doctrine but God's message, it requires a living witness who by his aliveness attests especially the extra-, super-, and also contra-human origin of the Word. As God's Word it cannot do without man's mouth if it wants to get through to man.

Lord Jesus, Who art come, A Teacher sent from heaven
And by both word and deed, God's truth to us hast given,
Thou wisely hast ordained, The holy ministry,
That we, Thy flock, may know, The way to God thro' Thee.

Lord Jesus, Who art Come, (1741) Eberhard L. Fischer

"You see, friends," he said, "that before the new, clean world I gave you is seven hours old, a force of evil has already entered it; waked and brought hither by this son of Adam." The Beasts, even Strawberry, all turned their eyes on Digory till he felt that he wished the ground would swallow him up. "But do not be cast down," said Aslan, still speaking to the Beasts. "Evil will come of that evil, but it is still a long way off, and I will see to it that the worst falls upon myself. In the meantime, let us take such order that for many hundred years yet this shall be a merry land in a merry world. And as Adam's race has done the harm, Adam's race shall help to heal it."

The Magician's Nephew (1955) C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)

Chapter 2 – Permitted Ones and Sent Ones

Now that the scene has been set and the direction established, the commentary and explanations will begin to diminish. The second chapter continues with the consequences of the Fall as several exit the Garden through the Portal. As you read the second chapter, note the following in your individual reading or in the course of group conversation.

- ◆ the names, colors and attributes of the four horses and their riders
- ◆ compare:
 - Gen. 3:15 & Matt. 24:14 & Rev. 6:1-2 & Rev. 19:11-16
 - Gen. 3:17 & Matt. 24: 6 & Rev. 6:3-4
 - Gen. 3:18 & Matt. 24: 7 & Rev. 6:5-6
 - Gen. 3:19 & Matt. 24: 9 & Rev. 6:7-8
- ◆ When were the horses of Revelation 6 released?
- ◆ The three consequences in the world
 - red is enmity
 - black is endemism
 - pale is entropy
- ◆ In any process or system, the random disorder of the universe is always increasing.
The Second Law of Thermodynamics
- ◆ Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553) fashioned a woodcut depicting the temptation of Eve. In this work of art Satan disguises himself as Eve – an image that would be pleasing to her. This is the cover art for the Epiphany 2000 issue of *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*. The thought that Satan took on the pleasing form of Eve is also an assertion made by “The Man of Law’s Tale” ...

‘We first must make pretence to be baptized

Cold water cannot hurt us very much —
And I shall have a banquet organized
To pay the Sultan out, if he should touch.
Though christened white, his wife and many such
Shall find there's blood to wash away! She'll want
More water than it takes to fill a font.'

O Sultanness! Root of iniquity!
Virago, second Queen Semiramis!
O serpent masked in femininity!
The Serpent bound in Hell was like to this
Pretended woman that can wreck the bliss
Off innocence and virtue, through the spite
Bred in thy devil's nest of foul delight!

O Satan, ever envious since the day
On which they chased you out of Paradise,
Our heritage! How soon you found the way
Through Eve to woman! Our bondage is the price.
And now this Christian match by your advice
Shall be undone. Of woman you have made
The instrument by which we are betrayed!

The Canterbury Tales (~1380) Geoffrey Chaucer (~1340-1400)

◆ Several doctrines introduced in the 2nd chapter ...

- Means of Grace
- Office of the Keys belong to the Church
- Ordination of the Pastor
- Conferring of the Keys
- One Holy Church

◆ Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" - therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:22-24).

◆ When the LORD God sent Adam and Eve out of Paradise was it because of His wrath or mercy?

The second Adam, Jesus Christ, points out that through the water of the bath of rebirth, the flickering flame – by which the cherubim guardian blocked the entry into paradise when the first Adam was expelled – would be extinguished. Where the one went out with his wife, having been conquered by his enemy, there the other might return with his spouse (namely, the church of the saints), as a conqueror over his enemy.

Homilies on the Gospels, Bede the Venerable (673-735)

◆ When Adam and Eve left Paradise were they members of the Kingdom of God?

- ◆ What do you make of the last paragraph on page 23?

He [the Bridegroom] replied, “Bestman, you are not taking my Bride to a *where*. You are taking her to *the when*.”

Chapter 3 – Appearances and Realities

Before you begin reading this chapter, meditate on the many wonderful thoughts that occupy our minds when we read from the Word what it will be like when we are taken from this vale of tears to be with the LORD God in Paradise and behold the Tree of Life. Think on just two of these Bible passages:

*Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?” I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are those who have come out of the great tribulation: they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve Him day and night within His Temple; and He Who sits upon the Throne will shelter them with His **Presence**. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the Throne will be their Shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:13-17)*

Then he showed me the river of the Water of Life, bright as crystal, flowing from the Throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the City; also, on either side of the river, the Tree of Life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall worship Him; they shall see His Face, and His Name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the LORD God will be their Light, and they shall reign for ever and ever (Revelation 22:1-5).

Ahh, to go from this land and life to such a place as has been prepared for us! What a difference it will be and how glorious and wonderful will be that first breath in Paradise. Now imagine the opposite — that is, going from Paradise in the Garden of Eden into this world of war, disease, plague, dust, darkness and dying. That is what takes place in chapter 3 of *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding*. Go ahead and read this chapter.

- ◆ Note the changes in the following and consider the reasons why they appear differently in this world. [It might be helpful to go to the front of the book — to the page before the Table of Contents — and read the section To the Reader and the Hearer.]
 - the black horse and rider
 - the red horse and rider
 - the pale horse and rider
 - the white horse and rider

*Behold, your King is coming to you, humble,
and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass.*

Matthew 21:5

So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, crying,

*"Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord,
even the King of Israel!"*

*And Jesus found a young ass and sat upon it; as it is written,
"Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your King is coming, sitting on an ass's colt!"
His disciples did not understand this at first; but when Jesus was glorified,
then they remembered that this had been written of Him and had been done to Him.
John 12:13-16*

- ◆ The Theology of the Cross is the scandalous Good News that God has disclosed Himself to us through the Incarnation of His Son, a man who died on a cross.

He is not worthy of being called a theologian who perceives the invisible things of God as intelligible through the things that He has made (Romans 1:20). [*Thesis 19*]

Rather, he is worthy of being called a theologian who perceives the visible things of God, His backside (Exod. 33:23), as intelligible through sufferings and the cross. [*Thesis 20*]
Heidelberg Disputation (1518) Martin Luther

- ◆ Note the changes in the landscape (see also Romans 8:22-23)

And I advise you never to think about it either, my dear Alyosha, especially about God, whether He exists or not. All such questions are utterly inappropriate for a mind created with an idea of only three dimensions. And so I accept God and am glad to, and what's more, I accept His wisdom, His purpose - what are utterly beyond our ken; I believe in the underlying order and the meaning of life; I believe in the eternal harmony in which they say we shall one day be blended. I believe in the Word to Which the universe is striving, and Which Itself was "with God," and Which Itself is God and so on, and so on, to infinity. There are all sorts of phrases for it. I seem to be on the right path, don't I? Yet would you believe it, in the final result I don't accept this world of God's, and, although I know it exists, I don't accept it at all. It's not that I don't accept God, you must understand, it's the world created by Him I don't and cannot accept.

The Brothers Karamazov (1880) Fyodor Mikahilovich Dostoevsky (1821-1881)

- ◆ Why trenches? Why do the pale horse and rider appear as they do?

"We were talking about this yesterday," he (Wolf Larsen) said. "I held that life was a ferment, a yeasty something which devoured life that it might live, and that living was merely successful piggishness. Why, if there is anything in supply and demand, life is the cheapest thing in the world. There is only so much water, so much earth, so much air; but the life that is demanding to be born is limitless. Nature is a spendthrift. Look at the fish and their millions of eggs. For that matter, look at you and me. In our loins are the possibilities of millions of lives. Could we but find time and opportunity and utilize the last bit and every bit of the unborn life that is in us, we could become the fathers of nations and populate continents. Life? Bah! It has no value. Of cheap things it is the cheapest. Everywhere it goes begging. Nature spills it out with a lavish hand. Where there is room for one life, she sows a thousand lives, and it's life eat life till the strongest and most piggish life is left."

The Sea-Wolf (1904) Jack London (1876-1916)

Chapter 4 – The Servant and the Burden

In this chapter a “runner” enters the story. Others will follow and, though not essential to the story, there is a purpose. Keep track of the runners as they appear on the scene. How many did you meet before you understood?

1. Poor
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

- ◆ the red thread and a distant rumble
- ◆ ways of knowing ... academic, experience, Other?

FAUSTUS

I was cheated;
I did not bargain for a soul like this,
But for the primal innocence that was Adam's
Before he fell to knowledge. Is it sin
To cancel out a sin? Does God love sin
To set such value on it? Or is He helpless
To undo the past; and did the devil speak truth?

JUDGE

All things God can do, but this thing He will not:
Unbind the chain of cause and consequence,
Or speed time's arrow backward. When man chose
To know like God, he also chose to be
Judged by God's values. Adam sinned, indeed,
And with him all mankind; and from that sin
God wrought a nobler virtue out for Adam,
And with him, all mankind. No soul can 'scape
That universal kinship and remain
Human — no man; not even God made man.
He, when He hung upon the fatal tree,
Felt all the passion of the world pierce through Him,
Nor shirked one moment of the ineluctable
Load of the years; but from the griefs of time
Wrought out the splendour of His eternity.
There is no waste with God; He cancels nothing
But redeems all.

FAUSTUS (*to* MEPHISTOPHELES)

Serpent, thou didst deceive me!

MEPHISTOPHELES

So Adam said, and Eve; but I spoke truth
To them and thee.

The Devil to Pay (1939 play) Dorothy Sayers

Did he speak truth? Or, did he speak the truth? Or, did he speak the truth and nothing but the truth? How are these questions different?

◆ “Knowing” Pain and Suffering

*For it was fitting for Him, for Whom are all things and by Whom are all things,
in bringing many sons to glory,
to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings .
Hebrews 2:10 - NKJ*

◆ From C.S. Lewis' *The Problem of Pain* ...

You would like to know how I behave when I am experiencing pain, not writing books about it. You need not guess, for I will tell you; I am a great coward. But what is that to the purpose? When I think of pain - of anxiety that gnaws like fire and loneliness that spreads out like a desert, and the heartbreaking routine of monotonous misery, or again of dull aches that blacken our whole landscape or sudden nauseating pains that knock a man's heart out at one blow, of pains that seem already intolerable and then are suddenly increased, or infuriating scorpion-stinging pains that startle into maniacal movement a man who seemed half dead with his previous tortures - it “quite o'ercrows my spirit.” If I knew any way of escape I would crawl through sewers to find it. But what is the good of telling you about my feelings? You know them already: they are the same as yours. I am not arguing that pain is not painful. Pain hurts. That is what the word means. I am only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made “perfect through suffering” is not incredible. To prove it palatable is beyond my design.

◆ From an essay titled, "True and False Values" by Lord David Cecil:

Good remains good even if it is not triumphant on earth. This is the religious view. And though the religious formulas of earlier times may seem obsolete, it is to the conception of life underlying them that we must return. Christianity has compelled the mind of man not because it is the most cheering view of man's existence but because it is truest to the facts. It alone combines a realistic view of human nature with an ideal which can satisfy the higher aspirations of the spirit. Christianity teaches that human life can never be made perfect. Man is born in sin, and sinful he will remain till the final dissolution of the earth. ...

Nor need our misfortunes on this earth be without compensation. One of the worst results of the philosophy of Progress is that it has taken away the significance of suffering. If the aim of life is only to achieve complete happiness on earth, suffering is an unmixed evil, a dreadful, deplorable sign of failure. Modern thinkers, to judge by their novels, do think this. Their stories are as full of tragic events as "Othello" or "King Lear", but they produce none of the same feeling of tragic elevation. For tragic elevation arises from the belief that suffering, if taken in the right spirit, reveals as nothing else can, the nature of the Universe. Lear is greater in his suffering than he ever could have been in his

happiness. He faces the ills of the world and learns from them. This is the Christian conception: according to Christian doctrine God suffered for us, and it is in suffering, if properly approached, that we come closest to Him. In most modern novels suffering merely distorts and depraves the character. Catastrophe in them is no more tragic than a street accident. The adoption of a more Christian view of suffering should make writers able to achieve a profundity of vision unattainable to them under the flattening influence of the philosophy of Progress.

-) The Hebrew word for “man” is “adam.” The word for “ground” is “adamah.” Adam was formed from the ground and then ... “Thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return” ⇒ Bestman Dusty.

“Canst thou be Virgil? thou that fount of splendour
When poured so wide a stream of lordly speech?”
Said I, and bowed my awe-struck head in wonder;

“O honour and light of poets all and each,
Now let my great love stead me - the bent brow
And long hours pondering all thy book can teach!

Thou art my master, and my author thou,
From thee alone I learned the singing strain,
The noble style, that does me honour now.

See there the beast that turned me back again -
Save me from her, great sage - I fear her so,
She shakes my blood through every pulse and vein.”

“Nay, by another path thou needs must go
If thou wilt ever leave this waste,” he said.

The Divine Comedy, Hell (1305-1320) Dante Alighieri (1265-1321)

Chapter 5 – Hurts and Pains

Courage is displayed with respect to confidence and fear, but not with respect to both equally: it is more particularly displayed in regard to objects of fear; for one who is unperturbed in the presence of terrors and comports himself rightly towards these is courageous in a fuller sense than one who does so in situations that inspire confidence. In fact, as has been said, men are sometimes called courageous for enduring pain. Hence Courage itself is attended by pain; and it is justly praised, because it is harder to endure pain than to abstain from pleasure. Not but what it would appear that the end corresponding to the virtue of Courage is really pleasant, only its pleasantness is obscured by the attendant circumstances. This is illustrated by the case of athletic contests: to boxers, for example, their end - the object they box for, the wreath and the honours of victory - is pleasant, but the blows they receive must hurt them, being men of flesh and blood, and also all the labour they undergo is painful; and these painful incidentals are so numerous that the final object, being a small thing, appears not to contain any pleasure at all. If then the same is true of Courage, the death or wounds that it may bring will be painful to the courageous man, and he will suffer them unwillingly; but he will endure them because it is noble to do so, or because it is base not to do so. And the more a man possesses all virtue, and the more happy he is, the more pain will death cause him; for to such a man life is worth most, and he stand to

lose the greatest goods, and knows that this is so, and this must be painful. But he is none the less courageous on that account, perhaps indeed he is more so, because he prefers glory in war to the greatest prizes of life.

Nicomachean Ethics (350 B.C.) Aristotle (383-322 B.C.)

Chapter 6 – Sorrows and Heartaches

- ◆ Liturgical Note __: *At that time men began to call upon the Name of the LORD (Genesis 4:26)*. Have you ever read the 4th Chapter of Genesis? Following the death of one named Abel and then another not named, the Church began to call formally and corporately upon the LORD. Thus the first Christian worship services began as death became manifest in the world. At the beginning of the Divine Service we call upon the One God, specifically, the LORD God, in Whose Name we are brought into the Kingdom of Heaven, specifically, "In the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Ghost." Thus, at the Invocation, the gathered children of God congregate in baptismal grace and await the opportunity to confess their sins and be absolved. Then comes the Introit – that is, the Words of Entrance, when they enter into the Holy Place.

It shall be that whoever calls on the Name of the LORD shall be saved (Acts 2:21).

- ◆ From Ignatius' *Letter to the Magnesians* (70-80 AD) ...

Let us, then, not be insensible of His goodness, for if He imitated us in our actions we should no longer exist. For this reason we should become His disciples and learn to live in Christian fashion. Whoever is called by any name other than this does not belong to God. Therefore put aside the bad leaven, now antiquated and sour, and turn to the new leaven, which is Jesus Christ. Be salted with Him, so that none of you may be spoiled, since you will be tested by your odor. It is absurd to talk of Jesus Christ and practice Judaism. For Christianity did not base its faith on Judaism, but Judaism on Christianity, in which every language believing in God was brought together. (Chapter 10)

- ◆ Romans 10:11-17 –

The Scripture says, "*No one who believes in Him will be put to shame.*" For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows His riches upon all who call upon Him. For, "*every one who calls upon the Name of the LORD will be saved.*" But how are men to call upon Him in Whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of Whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!*" But they have not all obeyed the Gospel; for Isaiah says, "*Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?*" So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.

- ◆ **The First Adam**

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned -- sin indeed was in the world before the Law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the One Who was to come (Rom. 5:12-14).

- ◆ **The First Eve**

The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20).

- ◆ **The Second Adam**

If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who

receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of Righteousness reign in Life through the one man Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).

◆ **The Second Eve**

[Paul to the Church at Corinth] - *I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband (2 Corinthians 1:11).*

◆ From Dorothy Sayers' 1946 play *The Just Vengeance*

[Cain has just slain his brother with an axe - a tool invented and intended to be a blessing. Then he departs from the Presence of the LORD.]

EVE

Alas! alas! must I lose both my sons,
One by injustice and the other by judgment?
O Cain, my first-born, will you not say you are sorry?
Ask pardon? Plead with your dead brother's blood
To speak for you, as the dead lamb's blood speaks
On the altar of sacrifice? What will you do, poor child,
Alone in the desert with the barren earth,
Outlawed by God and man?

CAIN

Don't trouble, Mother;
Your heart's too soft - I shall live long enough
To breed a race of Cains; and you shall see
The sevenfold vengeance - seven-and-seventyfold -
Before we are finished. Let the earth be barren!
We will build cities, and work in iron and brass,
And you shall bring your corn and oil and wine
And your fat cattle, and your souls, and sell them
To buy that produce. You can keep your axe;
We will make axes for all of you. Let me pass.

CHOIR

God is not served with engines - He takes no pleasure in horse-power,
Neither delighteth - in the speed of any man's going;
What though your two hands - span the dawn and the sunset
When one is the hand of Abel - and one is the hand of Cain?

RECORDER

So shall the seed of Cain take vengeance on Cain;
Though you slay innocence and outlaw guilt
You cannot undo the brotherhood of the blood.
Every man and every woman of you
Is the whole seed of Adam, not divided
But fearfully joined in the darkness of the double self.
Do you not know it? do you not feel it, all of you,
In the bone's marrow, in the labyrinth of the brain,

◆ From Martin Luther ...

Satan attacked this rock [faith in Christ] in Paradise when he persuaded our first parents to forsake their faith in the God who had given them life and who promised enduring life, and to try to become like God by means of their own wisdom and virtue (Gen. 3:5). In a further attack upon it that liar and murderer (John 8:44), who will always be completely consistent, soon set brother to kill brother, and this for no other reason than that by faith his godly brother had offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice (Heb. 11:4), while he, the wicked brother, who offered his works without faith, was not pleasing to God. Later there followed a continuous and unbearable persecution of this faith by Satan through the sons of Cain, until God was compelled to cleanse the world once and for all through the Flood and thus to preserve Noah, the herald of faith and righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). Yet Satan still kept his own line of descent through Ham, the third son of Noah. But who could recite it all? For thereafter the whole world went mad in opposition to this faith, inventing endless idols and religions, by which, as Paul says (Acts 14:16), everyone went his own way, in the hope of placating a god or a goddess or gods or goddesses by his own works, in other words, of redeeming himself from evil and sin by means of his own work, without the help of Christ. The acts and books of all the heathen provide plenty of evidence for all this.

But the heathen are nothing in comparison with Israel, the people or synagog of God, who not only were endowed beyond all others with the sure promises given to the fathers and then with the Law handed down by God through angels (Gal. 3:19) but were continually being reassured by the presence of the sayings, miracles, and deeds of the prophets. And yet Satan, that is, the insane idea of self-righteousness, made such headway among them that they killed all the prophets and finally even their promised Messiah, the very Son of God Himself, and all for the same reason, namely, because they all taught that men are pleasing to God by the grace of God, not by our own righteousness. From the beginning this has been the fundamental principle of the devil and of the world: "We do not want to seem to be doing evil, but whatever we do must be approved by God and agreed to by all His prophets. If they do not do this, they must die! Down with Abel, long live Cain! That must be our law." And so it is.

Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* (1535)

- ◆ Following the fallen lead of the Serpent, Cain the Murderer slithers from the Presence of the LORD and into the world. The Devil's head will be crushed by the Seed of the Woman, that is, by Jesus the Christ, and Cain's head is marked lest anyone, other than the LORD, slay him. Truly, *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31) for, ... He is risen, as He said (Matthew 28:6).*

By means of righteousness we come into God's Presence, as Moses did when he entered the thick cloud where God was. On the other hand, by the practice of evil a person leaves the Presence of the LORD. For example, Cain, when he killed his brother, left the LORD's Presence as far as his will was concerned.

Festal Letters () Athanasius

You see, since Cain perpetrated practically the same evil as the serpent, which like an instrument served the devil's purposes, and as the serpent introduced mortality by means of deceit, in like manner Cain deceived his brother, led him out into open country, raised his hand in armed assault against him and committed murder. Hence, as God said to the serpent, "Cursed are you beyond all the wild animals of the earth," so to Cain too when he committed the same evil as the serpent.

Homilies on Genesis () Xrysostom ()

- ◆ Concerning death after life and life after death in a world of war and peace ...

'Death after life' -- it is true, in a strange and bitter sense, that the desire for peace is the desire

for death. The very fear of death that lies behind our longing for peace is rooted in a paralyzing fear of life. We resent death, not because we have found life too good to leave, but because we feel that life has somehow cheated us. Those who fear death most are not those who are passionately in love with life, for these know very well that the shortness of life is the condition and price of its ecstasy; they are those who feel they are called on to pay the price for a joy they have not received. We rail angrily against death as though, but for some exasperating error on somebody's part, we ought to be all immortal; but that is not so.

'I did not bear my son to be killed by a German bomb'; no? And what particular death had you in mind for him when you bore him? Meningitis or cancer, pestilence or a broken neck, pneumonia or tuberculosis, death at the hand of a drunken lout in a road accident, or the creeping doom of senility? One thing is certain: that he was born for death -- of all your hopes and fears for him, this one thing will be fulfilled beyond question. He will die, like every other man that ever lived -- like Abraham and Alexander, like Caesar and Confucius, like Shakespeare and Cervantes and Socrates, like you and me and Tom, Dick and Harry, and like the Son of Mary who was the Son of God.

You did not imagine any death for your son; you did not think of death at all; you thought about life. There was a time when you knew that life was worth the living: when life was worth something to you, because you were creating life. If life can be made worth while, death will not matter at all; for life can be good, but it is not and cannot be an absolute, any more than anything else in this world. To make life into an absolute is to exchange it for death-in-life, because, like every other temporal absolute, life takes revenge on those who make it a god."

Begin Here (1941), Dorothy L. Sayers

- ◆ From the apocryphal writings ...

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be an affliction, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-3 (~100 B.C.)

- ◆ **The Church as Mother**

Learn this article, then, as clearly as possible. If you are asked, What do you mean by the words, "I believe in the Holy Spirit"? you can answer, "I believe that the Holy Spirit makes me holy, as his name implies." How does he do this? By what means? Answer: "Though the Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." In the first place, He has a unique community in the world. It is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit reveals and preaches that Word, and by it He illumines and kindles hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it.

Large Catechism (1529) Martin Luther

- ◆ For the bestman ...

For himself, he prayed that he might be given grace to be a true pastor, himself saved for Christ's sake, rooted in the old message, and equipped to care for souls as one rightly handling the unadulterated Word of God. Finally, he prayed for his own Church, as one prays for a beloved mother. He prayed that she might always remain truly apostolic, built on the age-long foundation, and always just as vigorous and youthful, filled with the renewing impulses of the life-giving Spirit.

The Hammer of God (1960) Bo Giertz ()

- ◆ At the end of Chapter 6 in *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding*:

- the Bride has begotten children
- two types of death are taking place
- the pale horse pursues and the net of death is in use
- Bestman Dusty has died

- Bestman Comfy is now leading the Bride
- the Bride is older (but remember, she will never perish)

Chapter 7 – Losses and Retreats

When men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took to wife such of them as they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown (Genesis 6:1-4).

There the families
of the two brothers had separated:
Cain went off by himself
and lived in the land of Nod,
a place lower still
than that of Seth and Enosh;
but those who lived on higher ground,
who were called
"the children of God"
left their own region and came down
to take wives
from the daughters of Cain down below.
Hymns on Paradise () Ephrem the Syrian

"Have we any greater evil for a city than what splits it and makes it many instead of one? Or a greater good than what binds it together and makes it one?"

"No, we don't."

"Doesn't the community of pleasure and pain bind it together, when to the greatest extent possible all the citizens alike rejoice and are pained at the same comings into being and perishings?"

"That's entirely certain," he said.

"But the privacy of such things dissolves it, when some are overwhelmed and others overjoyed by the same things happening to the city and those within the city?"

"Of course."

"Doesn't that sort of thing happen when they don't utter such phrases as 'my own' and 'not my own' at the same time in the city, and similarly with respect to 'somebody else's'?"

"Entirely so."

"Is, then, that city in which most say 'my own' and 'not my own' about the same things, and in the same way, the best governed city?"

"By far."

"Then is that city best governed which is most like a single human being? For example, when one of us wounds a finger, presumably the entire community - that community tying the body together with the soul in a single arrangement under the ruler within it - is aware of the fact, and all of it is in pain as a whole along with the afflicted part; and it is in this sense we say that this human being has a pain in his finger. And does the same argument hold for any other part of a human being, both when it is afflicted by pain and when eased by pleasure?"

"Yes, it does," he said. "And, as to what you ask, the city with the best regime is most like a human being."

"I suppose, then, that when one of its citizens suffers anything at all, either good or bad, such a

city will most of all say that the affected part is its own, and all will share in the joy or the pain.”
The Republic (~380 B.C.) Plato (428-347 B.C.)

Chapter 8 – Lifted Up and Let Down

- ◆ The Tension of Doctrine and Mission – Matthew 28:16-20
- ◆ The Church is Called out of the World by the Word in order to Proclaim the Word in the World.
 - Look up and read the following sections of the Holy Writ:
 - * 1 Peter 2:9-10
 - * Romans 10:14-16
 - * Romans 16:17
 - * Romans 9:22-28
 - * Colossians 1:19-23
 - * 1 Peter 3:18-22
 - * Matthew 24:36-44
- ◆ From the Sumarian epic *Gilgamesh* (~3,000 BC):

Man of Shurruk, he said, tear down your house
And build a ship. Abandon your possessions
And the works that you find beautiful and crave
And save your life instead. Into the ship
Bring the seed of all the living creatures.

The time of the great rains had come.
O there was ample warning, yes, my friend,
But it was terrifying still. Buildings
Blown by the winds for miles like desert brush.
People clung to branches of trees until
Roots gave way. New possessions, now debris,
Floated on the water with their special
Sterile vacancy. The riverbanks failed
To hold the water back. Even the gods
Cowered like dogs at what they had done.

.....

When the seventh day
Came, the flood subsided from its slaughter
Like hair drawn slowly back
From a tormented face.
I looked at the earth and all was silence.
Bodies lay like alewives dead
And in the clay. I fell down
On the ship's deck and wept. Why? Why did they
Have to die! I couldn't understand. I asked
Unanswerable questions a child asks
When a parent dies - for nothing. Only slowly
Did I make myself believe - or hope - they
Might all be swept up in their fragments
Together

And made whole again
By some compassionate hand.

- ◆ Liturgical Note __: The Forty days of Lent and the Flood waters of Baptism ...

But let us see where this most sacred number of forty days had its beginning. We read first in the Old Testament that in the time of Noah, when criminal wickedness had seized the whole human race, torrents of water poured forth from the opened floodgates of heaven for just as many days. In a kind of mysterious image of Quadregesima, this inundation of the earth refers not so much to a flood as to baptism. This was clearly a baptism in which the wickedness of sinners was removed and Noah's righteousness preserved. For this reason, then, the Lord has given us forty days now as well in imitation of that time, so that for this number of days, while the heavens are opened, a celestial rain of mercy might pour upon us and, with the flood, the water of the saving washing might enlighten us in baptism and — as was the case then — the wickedness of our sins might be quenched in us by the streams of water and the righteousness of our virtues preserved. For the very same thing is at issue with regard to Noah and in our own day: baptism is a flood to the sinner and a consecration to the faithful; by the Lord's washing, righteousness is preserved and unrighteousness is destroyed.

Sermons () Maximus of Turin ()

- ◆ 🕒 Timeline Check — Where are we? (Either look at page 2 or the timeline you are using).
- ◆ On page 70 the artwork of Anisa depicts what took place in chapter 8. With the rest of the world beneath them, the Bride in white, the bestman in black and six of her children of various ages are safely congregated within the chained circle on the Rock.

*Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to Thee;
at a time of distress, in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.
Thou art a hiding place for me, Thou preservest me from trouble;
Thou dost encompass me with deliverance (Psalm 32:6-7).*

Chapter 9 – Rebellion

This chapter immerses the reader in the man-made searches for God, the gods and the spiritual. Since all people have a genealogy that includes Noah, the Apostle Paul declares the truth that many departed. *Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and serve the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever! Amen (Romans 1:22-25).*

From the historical record, which includes but is not limited to the Scriptures, we know of the “big gods” like Anu the Sumarian God of ~ 3,000 BC – Baal the Phoenician God of ~ 2,500 BC and Marduk the Amorite God of about the same time – Osiris Egyptian God of ~ 2,400 BC – Dagan the Philistine God and Moloch the Ammonite God, both ~ 2,000 BC – Vishna the Hindu God of ~ 1500 BC – the Persian Gods of Zoroastrianism as well as the Greek and Roman gods. There were (and still are!) thousands of other gods throughout the world. These are the smaller, regional or area gods – ones that haunt the mountains, live in streams, inhabit the lands or stay in or fall from the sky.

But every nation still made gods of its own, and put them in the shrines of the high places which the Samaritans had

made, every nation in the cities in which they dwell; the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, and the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. They also fear the Lord, and appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. So they feared the Lord but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away. To this day they do according to the former manner (2 Kings 17:29-34).

There are even smaller gods and the Bible provides an account of them in Genesis 31:17-35. Take a moment to read of these household gods. ... Later, the Ten Commandments given by the LORD God to Moses would include: *You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them (Exodus 20:4-5).*

Thus, Christians are people of the Word and not people of the Picture. In *Reading Between the Lines – A Christian Guide to Literature*, Gene Edward Veith quotes Neil Postman, a media scholar and social critic. Please know that Neil Postman is not writing about anything that is specifically "religious" or Christian. The [brackets] below are added for clarification of the context.

According to Postman, "word-centered" people think in a completely different mode from "image-centered" people. His distinction is especially important for Christians, for whom the "Mosaic injunction" [Exodus 20:4 concerning the strict prohibition of making graven "images" for oneself] is eternally valid.

In an important book on education, Postman explores the differences between the mental processes involved in reading and those involved in television watching. Reading demands sustained concentration, whereas television promotes a very short attention span. Reading involves (and teaches) logical reasoning, whereas television involves (and teaches) purely emotional responses. Reading promotes continuity, the gradual accumulation of knowledge, and sustained exploration of ideas. Television, on the other hand, fosters fragmentation, anti-intellectualism, and immediate gratification.

Postman does not criticize the content of television - the typical worries about 'sex and violence" or the need for quality programming. Rather, the problem is in the properties of the form itself. Language is cognitive, appealing to the mind; images are affective, appealing to the emotions.

"This difference between symbols that demand conceptualization and reflection and symbols that evoke feeling has many implications, one of the most important being that the content of the TV curriculum is irrefutable. You can dislike it, but you cannot disagree with it.... There is no way to show that the feelings evoked by the imagery of a McDonald's commercial are false, or indeed, true. Such words as true and false come out of a different universe of symbolism altogether. Propositions are true or false. Pictures are not."

Teaching as a Conserving Activity () Neil Postman

Postman goes on to connect the newly emerging dominance of electronic images over words to habits of mind that are having monumental social consequences: to the undermining of authority, the loss of a sense of history, hostility to science [objective truth], pleasure-centeredness, and the emergence of new values based on instant gratification and the need to be continually entertained.

Reading Between the Lines () Gene Edward Veith

So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard come by the preaching of Christ – Romans 10:17.

The confession that there is only one God – the Lord, has drawn criticism from the Church’s neighbors during the days of the patriarchs down to this day when the Church declares that she believes in One God. Yesterday’s railings by the polytheists (those who believe in many gods) are re-enacted in today’s decrees by the multiculturalists who are tolerant of all except One.

A similar reversion to paganism was illustrated at the opening ceremonies of the 1994 Winter Olympics, held in Norway, when virtually the entire world saw representations of pre-Christian-era pagan underground “beings” called *Vetters*. Had the Lutheran Church of Norway (the nation’s state church), which counts about 95 percent of its country’s population as Christians, had any input? Did the Olympic decision makers even consult the church? Why was it so important to focus on pagan mythology?

While the opening ceremonies showed a piece of Norway’s history, no one mentioned Norway’s great leader and hero, Olaf Haraldsson, better known as St. Olaf, who presided over his nation’s first national assembly and moved it to adopt Christianity as the nation’s religion. When he abolished the pagan practices such as “blood sacrifices, black magic, the ‘setting out’ of infants, slavery, and polygamy,” his actions led to a rebellion in which he was slain in 1030. Ironically, the multiculturally minded Olympics of 1994 honored the pagan religion that cost the king’s life as he tried to civilize his nation, thus regressing a thousand years back to paganism.

The Menace of Multiculturalism — The Trojan Horse in America () Alvin J. Schmidt, pages 150-151.

Chapter 10 – Repulsive

- ◆ Promise of the Incarnation:
 - ⇒ “Seed of the Woman” - Genesis 3:15
 - ⇒ “Eve’s Incarnational Confession” - Genesis 4:1
 - ⇒ “Emmanuel” - “God with us” - Isaiah 7:14
 - ⇒ “Incarnate Word dwelling among us” - John 1:14
 - ⇒ “Son of David” & “Son of God” - Romans 1:3-4
 - ⇒ “The Robed Word of God” - Revelation 19:13

- ◆ Imitations of the Incarnation:
 - ⇒ “the Nephilim” of Genesis 6:4
 - ⇒ “the name-makers” or “the god-makers” of Genesis 11:4
 - ⇒ “Gilgamesh” (god & man of Sumaria)
 - ⇒ “Krishna” (incarnation of Vishnu)
 - ⇒ “Zeus” (and other Greek gods among us)
 - ⇒ “Jupiter” (and other Roman gods among us)

- ◆ a few more of the gods here and there ...

There was also a great dragon, which the Babylonians revered. And the king said to Daniel, “You cannot deny that this is a living god; so worship him.”

Daniel said, “I will worship the Lord my God, for He is the living God. But if you, O king, will give me permission, I will slay the dragon without sword or club.”

The king said, “I give you permission.”

Then Daniel took pitch, fat, and hair, and boiled them together and made cakes, which he fed to the dragon. The dragon ate them, and burst open. And Daniel said, “See what you have been worshipping!”

- ◆ From north of the Calcutta, India area, the Santal have the following oral tradition:

Long, long ago, according to Kolean, *Thakur Jiu* - the Genuine God - created the first man - Haram - and the first woman - Ayo - and placed them far to the west of India in a region called Hihiri Pipiri. There a being named Lita tempted them to make rice beer. Then Lita enticed them to pour part of the beer on the ground as an offering to Satan. Haram and Ayo became drunk on the rest of the beer and slept. When they awoke they knew they were naked and felt ashamed.

Ayo later bore Haram seven sons and seven daughters, who married and founded seven clans. The clans migrated to a region called Kroj Kama, where they became corrupted. Thakur Jiu called mankind to return to Him. When man refused, Thakur Jiu hid “a holy pair” in a cave on Mount Harata. Then Thakur Jiu destroyed the rest of mankind with a flood. Later, descendants of the “holy pair” multiplied and migrated to a plain called Sasan Beda. There Thakur Jiu divided them into many different peoples.

Eternity in Their Hearts, Richardson

From Mbaka people in Central Africa:

Later, however, our forefathers turned away from the truth about Koro’s Son (Koro the Creator.) In time they even forgot what it was that He accomplished for mankind.

Eternity in Their Hearts

Read the following as you prepare for the six chapters that follow:

- ◆ the Calling of the Prophet (Exodus 3:4-8)
- ◆ the Promise the Bridegroom (Hosea 2:19-20)
- ◆ the Love Song of the Bridegroom and the Bride (The Song of Solomon)
- ◆ the Calling of the Prophets (2 Kings 22:1-13 & Jeremiah 1:4-8)

Chapter 11 – Revelations

- ◆ the younger — Abel, Jacob, Joseph, John
- ◆ the youngest — Moses, David
- ◆ the young — Jeremiah, Timothy, Josiah (8 years old), Jesus (8 days old)

The road must be trod, but it will be very hard. And neither strength nor wisdom will carry us far upon it. This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere.

The Fellowship of the Ring () J.R.R. Tolkien, page 353.

Chapter 12 – Reunions

- ◆ Please take the time to read from the Word ...
 - ⇒ *the affliction of My people who are in Egypt* (Exodus 3:7-10)
 - ⇒ *by the waters of Babylon* (Psalm 137:1-9)
 - ⇒ *the wormwood and the gall* (Lamentations 3:19-27)
- ◆ Song of Solomon 6:1 - *Whither has your Beloved gone?*

The bride, sad because she has lost her Bridegroom, has searched for Him in other cities, but has not found Him. The daughters nevertheless promise their own efforts to help her by their prayers, and by joining in the search for the Bridegroom.

Commentary on Song of Solomon () Martin Luther

Chapter 13 – Reunited

- ◆ [In *The Princess and Curdie*, the miner boy named is captured by the goblins and imprisoned. The young princess, Irene, has followed the way of the thread given her by her great-great-grandmother. It leads into the mountain where the goblins live. In doing so she has discovered the place where Curdie was kept and, following the thread, has led both of them out the mountain maze. Curdie is speaking with his mother about the episode]

"You confess, my boy," she said, "there is something about the whole affair you do not understand?"

"Yes, of course, Mother," he answered. "I cannot understand how a child knowing nothing about the mountain, or even that I was shut up in it, should come all that way alone, straight to where I was, and then, after getting me out of the hole, lead me out of the mountain too, where I should not have know a step of the way if it had been as light as in the open air."

"Then you have no right to say what she told you was not true. She did take you out, and she must have had something to guide her: why not a thread as well as a rope, or anything else? There is something you cannot explain, and her explanation may be the right one."

"It's no explanation at all, Mother, and I can't believe it."

"That may be only because you do not understand it. If you did, you would probably find it was an explanation, and believe it thoroughly. I don't blame you for not being able to believe it, but I do blame you for fancying such a child would try to deceive you. Why should she? Depend upon it, she told you all she knew. Until you had found a better way of accounting for it all, you might at least have been more sparing of your judgment."

The Princess and the Goblin (1871) George MacDonald, pages 153-154

Chapter 14 – Revolting

- ◆ A couple contests in the Bible:
- ◆ Moses and Aaron versus Pharaoh and Magicians – chapters 7 - 10 of Exodus
- ◆ Elijah versus the prophets of Baal – 1 Kings 18
- ◆ A couple contests in literature:
 - ⇒ What is strongest?

Then the three young men of the bodyguard, who kept guard over the person of the king, said to one another, "Let each of us state what one thing is strongest; and to him whose statement seems wisest, Darius the king will give rich gifts and great honors of victory. He shall be clothed in purple, and drink from gold cups, and sleep on a gold bed, and have a chariot with gold bridles, and a turban of fine linen, and a necklace about his neck; and because of his wisdom he shall sit next to Darius and shall be called kinsman of Darius." Then each wrote his own statement, and they sealed them and put them under the pillow of Darius the king, and said, "When the king wakes, they will give him the writing; and to the one whose statement the king and the three nobles of Persia judge to be wisest the victory shall be given according to what is written."

The first wrote, "Wine is strongest."

The second wrote, "The king is strongest."

The third wrote, "Women are strongest, but truth is victor over all things."

When the king awoke, they took the writing and gave it to him, and he read it. Then he sent and summoned all the nobles of Persia and Media and the satraps and generals and governors and prefects, and he took his seat in the council chamber, and the writing was read in their presence. And he said, "Call the young men, and they shall explain their statements." So they were summoned, and came in.

1 Esdras 3:4-16

⇒ Bilbo and Gollum

"Very well," said Bilbo, who was anxious to agree, until he found out more about the creature, whether he was quite alone, whether he was fierce or hungry, and whether he was a friend of the goblins.

"you ask first," he said, because he had not had time to think of a riddle.

So Gollum hissed:

What has roots as nobody sees,

Is taller than trees,

Up, up it goes,

And yet never grows?

"Easy!" said Bilbo. "Mountains, I cuppose."

"Does it guess easy? It must have a competition with us, my precious! If precious asks, and it doesn't answer, we eats it, my preciousss. If it asks us, and we doesn't answer, then we does what it wants, eh? We shows it the way out, yes!"

"All right!" said Bilbo, not daring to disagree, and nearly bursting his brain to think of riddles that could save him from being eaten.

The Hobbit () J.R.R. Tolkien, pages 80-81.

Chapter 15 – Reassembling

- ◆ Deliverance is from the LORD!
- ◆ *It's the LORD's Passover! (Exodus 12:11).*
- ◆ Read chapters 12 - 14 of Exodus.

Chapter 16 – Recoiling

Moses:

Psalm XC

Remember
the slave shack?
the rush bed
one the river?
the pagan palace
which was your
splendid prison?
the dust

of Midian's deserts?
the skin tents?
the wanderings in
a wilderness
walled in with thirst
and unthankfulness -
pot-holed
with graves?

Remember? How
could I forget, Lord?
yet always You
have been
my dwelling place.

Listen to the Green () Luci Shaw ()

Deliverance is from the LORD!

- ◆ The Siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:32-37)
- ◆ The Edict of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-11)

From the Apocryphal Books of *Susanna* (~200 BC) and *Tobit* (~200 BC) ...

Now Susanna was a woman of great refinement, and beautiful in appearance. As she was veiled, the wicked men ordered her to be unveiled, that they might feed upon her beauty. But her family and friends and all who saw her wept. Then the two elders stood up in the midst of the people, and laid their hands upon her head. And she, weeping, looked up toward heaven, for her heart trusted in the Lord. The elders said, "As we were walking in the garden alone, this woman came in with two maids, shut the garden doors, and dismissed the maids. Then a young man, who had been hidden, came to her and lay with her. We were in a corner of the garden, and when we saw this wickedness we ran to them. We saw them embracing, but we could not hold the man, for he was too strong for us, and he opened the doors and dashed out. So we seized this woman and asked her who the young man was, but she would not tell us. These things we testify." The assembly believed them, because they were elders of the people and judges; and they condemned her to death. Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said, "O eternal God, who dost discern what is secret, who art aware of all things before they come to be, thou knowest that these men have borne false witness against me. And now I am to die! Yet I have done none of the things that they have wickedly invented against me!" The Lord heard her cry.

(Susanna 1:31-44)

Here Tobit ended his words of praise. He was fifty-eight years old when he lost his sight, and after eight years he regained it. He gave alms, and he continued to fear the Lord God and to praise Him. When he had grown very old he called his son and grandsons, and said to him, "My son, take your sons; behold, I have grown old and am about to depart this life. Go to Media, my son, for I fully believe what Jonah the prophet said about Nineveh, that it will be overthrown. But in Media there will be peace for a time. Our brethren will be scattered over the earth from the good land, and Jerusalem will be desolate. The House of God in it will be burned down and will be in ruins for a time. But God will again have mercy on them, and bring them back into their land; and they will rebuild the house of God, though it will not be like the former one until the times of the age are completed. After this they will return from the places of their captivity, and will rebuild Jerusalem in splendor. And the House of God will be rebuilt there with a glorious building for all generations for ever, just as the prophets said of it" (14:1-5).

- ◆ What does this mean? (It's from page 130 of *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding*.)

A week and a day first blood's shed, (Luke 2:21)
 A score and a half first born's dead, (Luke 3:23 & John 19:30)
 So lift up thy face, (John 3:14-15)
 He's taken thy place, (Matthew 27:46)
 A-rose and a wedding's ahead. (Mark 16:6 & Revelation 19:6-9)

- ◆ 🕒 Timeline Check – Where are we?
- ◆ What is the name of the last of the nine runners? (page 130)
- ◆ What is his attribute?
- ◆ Who is coming next?
- ◆ Read the last two verses of the Old Testament.
- ◆ Liturgical Note __: Thus the Church sings and petitions during the Season of Advent as she patiently waits for her dearly Beloved and faithfully endures the sore afflictions of the world from those without and the worldly ones from the false sons within her pale.

Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel,
 And ransom captive Israel,
 That mourns in lonely exile here,
 Until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice!
 Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel
 (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, #62, stanza 1)

- ◆ Song of Solomon 8:6 - "Set Me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm."

The Bridegroom urges the bride to persist in the Word and not to allow herself to be led astray outside the Word either to her own thoughts or to some alien cult. "Come," He says, "let Me be to you like a seal, like a ring by which you will recognize Me and embrace Me from your heart. Look at Me! Fix your eyes and your heart on Me!" "But where are You?" "In the Word," He says, "in Jerusalem and in My temple."

Commentary on Song of Solomon () Martin Luther

- ◆ From the history books concerning the "Great" ones ...

After Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated Darius, king of the Persians and the Medes, he succeeded him as king. (He had previously become king of Greece.) He fought many battles, conquered strongholds, and put to death the kings of the earth. He advanced to the ends of the earth, and plundered many nations. When the earth became quiet before him, he was exalted, and his heart was lifted up. He gathered a very strong army and ruled over countries, nations, and princes, and they became tributary to him. After this he fell sick and perceived that he was dying. So he summoned his most honored officers, who had been brought up with him from youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. And after Alexander had reigned twelve years, he died. Then his officers began to rule, each in his own place. They all put on crowns after his death, and so did their sons after them for many years; and they caused many evils on the earth. From them came forth a sinful root, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the king; he had been a hostage in Rome. He began to reign in the one hundred and thirty-seventh year of the kingdom

of the Greeks. ...

Now on the fifteenth day of Chislew, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege upon the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding cities of Judah, and burned incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. The books of the law which they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of any one, or if any one adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death. They kept using violence against Israel, against those found month after month in the cities. And on the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar which was upon the altar of burnt offering. According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks. But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. And very great wrath came upon Israel (*1 Maccabees 1:1-10 & 54-64*).

- ◆ With the conquering by Alexander the Great, the Greek tongue was enjoined upon all of the lands his armies invaded. Thus the scene was set for a common language and is the reason why the New Testament was written in Greek. Throughout the years the One Holy Church (*Una Sancta*) has suffered under the lash of tyrant and traitor. Still *Una* sings ...

Oh, come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel

(*The Lutheran Hymnal*, #62, stanza 2)

- ◆ Liturgical Note __: The Church and the children therein have confessed the faith in the words of the creeds and this often at the risk of death itself. Thousands of years before the Birth of the Savior in Bethlehem, Job confessed his belief in the Resurrection of the dead (Job 19:25-27). So did the mother confess her faith in the Lord Who will call His own forth from their graves and thus did she catechize her sons concerning the same:

It happened also that seven brothers and their mother were arrested and were being compelled by the king, under torture with whips and cords, to partake of unlawful swine's flesh. One of them, acting as their spokesman, said, "What do you intend to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our fathers." The king fell into a rage, and gave orders that pans and caldrons be heated. These were heated immediately, and he commanded that the tongue of their spokesman be cut out and that they scalp him and cut off his hands and feet, while the rest of the brothers and the mother looked on. When he was utterly helpless, the king ordered them to take him to the fire, still breathing, and to fry him in a pan. The smoke from the pan spread widely, but the brothers and their mother encouraged one another to die nobly, saying, "The Lord God is watching over us and in truth has compassion on us, as Moses declared in his song which bore witness against the people to their faces, when he said, `And he will have compassion on his servants.'"

After the first brother had died in this way, they brought forward the second for their sport. They tore off the skin of his head with the hair, and asked him, "Will you eat rather than have your body punished limb by limb?" He replied in the language of his fathers, and said to them, "No." Therefore he in turn underwent tortures as the first brother had done. And when he was at his last breath, he said, "You

accused wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws." After him, the third was the victim of their sport. When it was demanded, he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched forth his hands, and said nobly, "I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again."

As a result the king himself and those with him were astonished at the young man's spirit, for he regarded his sufferings as nothing. When he too had died, they maltreated and tortured the fourth in the same way. And when he was near death, he said, "One cannot but choose to die at the hands of men and to cherish the hope that God gives of being raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life!"

Next they brought forward the fifth and maltreated him. But he looked at the king, and said, "Because you have authority among men, mortal though you are, you do what you please. But do not think that God has forsaken our people. Keep on, and see how his mighty power will torture you and your descendants!" After him they brought forward the sixth. And when he was about to die, he said, "Do not deceive yourself in vain. For we are suffering these things on our own account, because of our sins against our own God. Therefore astounding things have happened. But do not think that you will go unpunished for having tried to fight against God!"

The mother was especially admirable and worthy of honorable memory. Though she saw her seven sons perish within a single day, she bore it with good courage because of her hope in the Lord. She encouraged each of them in the language of their fathers. Filled with a noble spirit, she fired her woman's reasoning with a man's courage, and said to them, "I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of man and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws."

Antiochus felt that he was being treated with contempt, and he was suspicious of her reproachful tone. The youngest brother being still alive, Antiochus not only appealed to him in words, but promised with oaths that he would make him rich and enviable if he would turn from the ways of his fathers, and that he would take him for his friend and entrust him with public affairs.

(2 Maccabees 7:1-24)

Then the king, completely inflexible, was filled with overpowering anger and wrath; so he summoned Hermon, keeper of the elephants, and ordered him on the following day to drug all the elephants -- five hundred in number -- with large handfuls of frankincense and plenty of unmixed wine, and to drive them in, maddened by the lavish abundance of liquor, so that the Jews might meet their doom. When he had given these orders he returned to his feasting, together with those of his friends and of the army who were especially hostile toward the Jews. And Hermon, keeper of the elephants, proceeded faithfully to carry out the orders. The servants in charge of the Jews went out in the evening and bound the hands of the wretched people and arranged for their continued custody through the night, convinced that the whole nation would experience its final destruction.

(3 Maccabees 5:1-5)

"My sons, noble is the contest to which you are called to bear witness for the nation. Fight zealously for our ancestral law. For it would be shameful if, while an aged man endures such agonies for the sake of religion, you young men were to be terrified by tortures. Remember that it is through God that you have had a share in the world and have enjoyed life, and therefore you ought to endure any suffering

for the sake of God. For his sake also our father Abraham was zealous to sacrifice his son Isaac, the ancestor of our nation; and when Isaac saw his father's hand wielding a sword and descending upon him, he did not cower. And Daniel the righteous was thrown to the lions, and Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael were hurled into the fiery furnace and endured it for the sake of God. You too must have the same faith in God and not be grieved. It is unreasonable for people who have religious knowledge not to withstand pain."

By these words the mother of the seven encouraged and persuaded each of her sons to die rather than violate God's commandment. They knew also that those who die for the sake of God live in God, as do Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs.

(4 Maccabees 16)

- ◆ Amazing! Satan and the forces of darkness fear the Seed of the woman, and therefore, fear all women ...

He says "her Seed." It is as if He were saying: "Through the woman you, Satan, set upon and seduced the man, so that through sin you might be their head and master. But I, in turn, shall lie in wait for you by means of the same instrument. I shall snatch away the woman, and from her I shall produce a Seed, and that Seed will crush your head. You have corrupted the flesh through sin and have made it subject to death, but from that very flesh I shall bring forth a Man who will crush and prostrate you and all your powers."

Thus this promise and this threat are very clear, and yet they are also very indefinite. They leave the devil in such a state that he suspects all mothers of giving birth to this Seed, although only one woman was to be the mother of this blessed Seed. Thus because God is threatening in general when He says, "her Seed," He is mocking Satan and making him afraid of all women."

Commentary on Genesis () Martin Luther

- ◆ On page 133 the black net has now extended around the world. Not only does death now pursue from behind, it also remains at the one side ... sometimes a distant reminder of what has been ... often a closer look at what will be. Still the Church continues.
- ◆ A momentary diversion to read a bit from a fantasy journey that is more journey and not so much fantasy:

"I wouldn't trust it," said Sam, "not till I was dying of thirst. There's a wicked feeling about this place." He sniffed. "And a smell, I fancy. Do you notice it? A queer kind of a smell, stuffy. I don't like it."

"I don't like anything here at all," said Frodo, "step or stone, breath or bone. Earth, air and water all seem accursed. But so our path is laid."

"Yes, that's so," said Sam. "And we shouldn't be here at all, if we'd known more about it before we started. But I suppose it's often that way. The brave things in the old tales and songs, Mr. Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them, because they were exciting and life was a bit dull, a kind of a sport, as you might say. But that's not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them usually -- their paths were laid that way, as you put it. But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know, because they'd have been forgotten. We hear about those as just went on -- and not all to a good end, mind you; at least not to what folk inside a story and not outside it call a good end. You know, coming home, and finding things all right, though not quite the same -- like old Mr. Bilbo. But those aren't always the best tales to hear, though they may be the best tales to get landed in! I wonder what sort of a tale we've fallen into?"

"I wonder," said Frodo. "But I don't know. And that's the way of a real tale. Take any one that you're fond of. You may know, or guess, what kind of a tale it is, happy-ending or sad-ending, but the people in it don't know. And you don't want them to."

"No, sir, of course not. Beren now, he never thought he was going to get that Silmaril from the Iron Crown in Thangorodrim, and yet he did, and that was a worse place and a blacker danger than ours. But that's a long tale, of course, and goes on past the happiness and into grief and beyond it -- and the Silmaril went on and came to E rendil. And why, sir, I never thought of that before! We've got -- you've got some of the light of it in that star-glass that the Lady gave you! Why, to think of it, we're in the same tale still! It's going on. Don't the great tales never end?"

"No, they never end as tales," said Frodo. "But the people in them come, and go when their part's ended. Our part will end later -- or sooner."

"And then we can have some rest and some sleep," said Sam. He laughed grimly. "And I mean just that, Mr. Frodo. I mean plain ordinary rest, and sleep, and waking up to a morning's work in the garden. I'm afraid that's all I'm hoping for all the time. All the big important plans are not for my sort. Still, I wonder if we shall ever be put into songs or tales. We're in one, of course; but I mean: put into words, you know, told by the fireside, or read out of a great big book with red and black letters, years and years afterwards. And people will say: 'Let's hear about Frodo and the Ring!' And they'll say: 'Yes, that's one of my favourite stories. Frodo was very brave, wasn't he, dad?' 'Yes, my boy, the famousest of the hobbits, and that's saying a lot.'"

"It's saying a lot too much," said Frodo, and he laughed, a long clear laugh from his heart. Such a sound had not been heard in those places since Sauron came to Middle-earth. To Sam suddenly it seemed as if all the stones were listening and the tall rocks leaning over them. But Frodo did not heed them; he laughed again. "Why, Sam," he said, "to hear you somehow makes me as merry as if the story was already written. But you've left out one of the chief characters: Samwise the stouthearted. I want to hear more about Sam, dad. Why didn't they put in more of his talk, dad? That's what I like, it makes me laugh. And Frodo wouldn't have got far without Sam, would he, dad?"

"Now, Mr. Frodo," said Sam, "you shouldn't make fun. I was serious."

"So was I," said Frodo, "and so I am. We're going on a bit too fast. You and I, Sam, are still stuck in the worst places of the story, and it is all too likely that some will say at this point: 'Shut the book now, dad; we don't want to read any more.'"

"Maybe," said Sam, "but I wouldn't be one to say that. Things done and over and made into part of the great tales are different. Why, even Gollum might be good in a tale, better than he is to have by you, anyway. And he used to like tales himself once, by his own account. I wonder if he thinks he's the hero or the villain?"

"Gollum!" he called. "Would you like to be the hero -- now where's he got to again?"

The Two Towers () J. R. R. Tolkien ()

- ◆ Then the legions from Rome advanced upon the world scene ...

In the third month of siege, when after great difficulty they overthrew one of the towers and breached the wall, the Romans burst into the Temple area. ... Twelve thousand Jews perished; very few Romans were killed, though many were wounded. (Josephus' *The Jewish War*, 1, VII, 4-5).

- ◆ Thus do the Roman rule, the *Pax Romana* and the Caesars enter the stage of history.

Fearing that this district would again become a base for raids on Damascus, Caesar subsequently presented it to Herod. (Josephus' *The Jewish War*, 1, XX, 4).

... and then the Christ Mass!

- ◆ 🕒 Timeline Check – Where and when are we?

|| *Thus when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4-5). In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled (Luke 2:1). Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him" (Matthew 2:1-2).*

Chapter 17 – Three Throgs and a Few Babies

- ◆ The First Throng – The Coterie of Inscribers

*Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a **scribe** skilled in the law of Moses which the LORD the God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was upon him (Ezra 7:6).*

*When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and **scribes** of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: `And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.'" (Matthew 2:3-6).*

- ◆ The Second Throng – The Corps of Escort Sentinels

*Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many. And I said to them, "Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot; and while they are still standing guard let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint **guards** from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, each to his station and each opposite his own house" (Nehemiah 7:1-3).*

*Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter followed Him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the **guards** to see the end. (Matthew 26:57-68).*

- ◆ The Third Throng – The Cadre of Seventy Groomsmen

*And He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and **seventy** of the elders of Israel, and worship afar off. Moses alone shall come near to the LORD; but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him" (Exodus 24:1-2).*

In the New Testament times, the Sanhedrin was made up of 70 members plus the High Priest. The Sanhedrin was made up of elders, chief priests and teachers of the Torah (the five books of Moses). The Sanhedrin was like the Church Council, a sort of Jewish Supreme Court. It could not, however, impose or carry out the death penalty. This is the religious scene in and around Jerusalem when, *in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled (Luke 2:1).*

- ◆ Commentary on Song of Solomon 8:1 ...

We said at the beginning that this book of Solomon was a sort of hymn in which he sings the divine blessings shown to his people through the Word and expresses his thanks for them. Here he appears to begin his conclusion to this canticle and to pray for the future spread of the kingdom. For he gazes forward to the time of Christ, when the Word and the worship of God would be spread throughout the whole world. This is similar to the prayer in the psalm: "*Strengthen, O God, what You have wrought in us: (Ps. 68:28).*"

1. "*O that someone would give You to me as my little Brother, one who nurses at my mother's breast, that I might meet You outside and kiss You!*"

The sense is: "O our God, expand this kingdom into infinity." It is already "outside in the field," that is, in the neighboring tribes, and it longs to expand even beyond that.

He pictures the Bridegroom as an infant sucking at its mother's breast. For if you look at other realms into which He was to be introduced, God seemed to be like a little baby in this people. So she says: "You are like a child sucking his mother's milk. Who will give me the privilege that I may see You introduced abroad to all peoples through the Word of the Gospel?"

She adds: "That I might kiss You." To "kiss" is to give the Word, to possess the Gospel. "When these things take place," she says, "men will no longer despise me. Now we are a contemptible people. But then there will be some in every kingdom of the whole world who will revere and praise me, who will embrace the worship of God and believe the Word of God, etc."

Commentary on Song of Solomon () Martin Luther

- ◆ The revelation of the presence of God as described in commentary, story and allegory ...

Beatrice remains in the *story* what she was in real life: the Florentine girl whom Dante loved from the first moment that he saw her, and in whom he seemed (as is sometimes the case with lovers) to see Heaven's glory walking the earth bodily. Because, for him, she was thus in fact the vehicle of the Glory - the earthly vessel in which the divine experience was carried - she is, in the *allegory*, from time to time likened to, or equated with, those other "God-bearers": the Church, and the Divine Grace in the Church; the Blessed Virgin; even Christ Himself. She is the image by which Dante perceives all these, and her function in the poem is to bring him to that state in which he is able to perceive them directly; at the end of the *Paradiso* the image of Beatrice is - not replaced by, but - taken up into the images, successively, of the Church Triumphant; of Mary, the historic and universal God-bearer; and of God, in whom Image and Reality are one and the same. Beatrice thus represents for every man that person - or, more generally, that experience of the Not-self - which, by arousing his adoring love, has become for him the God-bearing image, the revelation of the presence of God.

Introduction to Dante's Hell () Dorothy L. Sayers

Chapter 18 – The Tenth Runner and the Last Card

- ◆ What does this mean?

"The nine have come, who'll meet on the mount"

(Here's a poor hint.) (Here's another hint: Matthew 5:3-11)

"One more must precede, and complete is the count."

(Malachi 3:1 & 4:5) (The perfect number is ____.)

"The Bridegroom is near, that promise disperser,

"His advent's fulfilled, when you've met the precursor"

- ◆ Why *Lizzie* and why in the *desert*?
- ◆ “Sonodad” or “Soloman” ?

Chapter 19 – Two Resolutions and One Speech

- ◆ John 2:19-20 – Matthew 10:34-36 – Matthew 22:17-21 – Matthew 23:15 – Matthew 23:37-38

Chapter 20 – Too Late and One Decision

- ◆ Luke 20:19-20 – John 8:56-59 – John 11:47-53

Chapter 21 – Won Decision and Two Warrants

- ◆ What were the charges against Jesus brought to the State (Pontius Pilate) ? Read Luke 23:1-5.
- ◆ What were the charges brought against Barrabbas by the State ? Read Luke 23:18-25.
- ◆ What were the charges against Jesus in the Church (before the Sanhedrin) ? Read Matthew 26:59:66.

WANTED: YESHU HANNOSRI (JESUS OF NAZARETH)

He shall be stoned because he practiced sorcery
and enticed Israel to apostasy.
Anyone who can say anything in his favor,
let him come forward and plead on his behalf.
Anyone who knows where he is, let him declare it to
the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.
Sanhedrin 43a of the Babylonian Talmud

Chapter 22 – Two Arrested and One Released

- ◆ A condemned man is suddenly rescued by a strange man who exchanges places with him and is executed in the condemned man’s place.

"You have no time to ask me why I bring it, or what it means; I have no time to tell you. You must comply with it--take off those boots you wear, and draw on these of mine."

There was a chair against the wall of the cell, behind the prisoner. Carton, pressing forward, had already, with the speed of lightning, got him down into it, and stood over him, barefoot.

"Draw on these boots of mine. Put your hands to them; put your will to them. Quick!"

"Carton, there is no escaping from this place; it never can be done. You will only die with me. It is madness."

"It would be madness if I asked you to escape; but do I? When I ask you to pass out at that door, tell me it is madness and remain here. Change that cravat for this of mine, that coat for this of mine. While you do it, let me take this ribbon from your hair, and shake out your hair like this of mine!"

With wonderful quickness, and with a strength both of will and action, that appeared quite supernatural, he forced all these changes upon him. The prisoner was like a young child in his hands.

A Tale of Two Cities () Charles Dickens ()

- ◆ After reading chapter 21 of *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding*, read Matthew 27:11-26. Then

address the following questions:

⇒ Who is Sonodad?

- that is: “Son” = “Bar”
- plus: “Abba” = “Father” or “Dad”

⇒ Who is Soloman?

- that is, Solomon (a son of David)
- that is, Solo Man (the only, lone, alone Man who could do this)
- that is, Sol o’ Man (Sol = “sun”) + (o’ = of) + (Man)

Chapter 23 – Two Died and One Won

- ◆ Read Isaiah 52:13 – Isaiah 53:12.
- ◆ At one end of the bestman’s chain is the small ironwood box where the means of grace are kept. In this chapter we discover what the contraption is at the other end of the bestman’s chain! What is it? Look at the front cover of the book. Anisa has pictured the following on the cover: the ironwood box with the chain attached at the top, the awful metal trap, the cross with the two rings where the Bridegroom redeemed His Bride, the white cloak in the background to the right, and the black wool robe of the bestman to the left.
- ◆ Headbanger meets Footstomper!
- ◆ One should die for all ...

“Muzzle him!” said the Witch. And even now, as they worked about his face putting on the muzzle, one bite from his jaws would have cost two or three of them their hands. But he never moved. And this seemed to enrage all that rabble. Everyone was at him now. Those who had been afraid to come near him even after he was bound began to find their courage, and for a few minutes the two girls could not even see him - so thickly was he surrounded by the whole crowd of creatures kicking him, hitting him, spitting on him, jeering at him.

At last the rabble had had enough of this. They began to drag the bound and muzzled Lion to the Stone Table, some pulling and some pushing. He was so huge that even when they got him there it took all their efforts to hoist him onto the surface of it. Then there was more tying and tightening of cords.

“The cowards! The cowards!” sobbed Susan. “Are they *still* afraid of him, even now?”

When once Aslan had been tied (and tied so that he was really a mass of cords) on the flat stone, a hush fell on the crowd. Four Hags, holding four torches, stood at the corners of the Table. The Witch bared her arms as she had bared them the previous night when it had been Edmund instead of Aslan. Then she began to whet her knife. It looked to the children, when the gleam of the torchlight fell on it, as if the knife were made of stone, not of steel, and it was of a strange and evil shape.

At last she drew near. She stood by Aslan’s head. Her face was working and twitching with passion, but his looked up at the sky, still quiet, neither angry nor afraid, but a little sad. Then, just before she gave the blow, she stooped down and said in a quivering voice, ...

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe () C. S. Lewis

- ◆ At the 6th hour, that is, at high noon, Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, hung in darkness on the cross.

The darkened sun at its zenith was (in the language of the astronomers) not far from “the head of the

dragon,” thus signifying that Christ was at the same time crushing the head of the hellish Snake, the old Dragon, Revelation 12. And since the moon has no light without the sun, it is thus to be concluded that the moon, in the opposite portion of the heavens, was likewise at the same time also darkened by the tail of the Dragon, as the hellish Dragon at that time stung His heel, and He indeed felt [the Devil’s] stinger on the cross, Gen. 3[v. 15].

An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ (~1622) Johann Gerhard, p. 273.

- ◆ *But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water (John 19:34).*

The blood and water which flowed from the side of Christ on the cross signify both the Sacrament of Baptism and of the holy Supper. A Church is gathered for the Lord Christ through these Sacraments, and a spiritual bride is led to Him, just as a rib was once taken from the side of Adam and through it Eve was fashioned for him in Gen. 2:22.

A Comprehensive Explanation of Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (1610) Johann Gerhard (1582-1637) p. 54.

Chapter 24 – First Fruit and Second Genesis

- ◆ A voice from the past that is experienced at the cross:

Luke 2:34-35 - Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

- ◆ Mary's song

Blue homespun and the bend of my breast
keep warm this small hot naked star
fallen to my arms. (Rest ...
you who have had so far
to come.) Now nearness satisfies
the body of God sweetly. Quiet he lies
whose vigor hurled
a universe. He sleeps
whose eyelids have not closed before.

His breath (so slight it seems
no breath at all) once ruffled the dark deeps
to sprout a world.
Charmed by dove's voices, the whisper of straw,
he dreams,
hearing no music from his other spheres.
Breath, mouth, ears, eyes
he is curtailed
who overflowed all skies,
all years.
Older than eternity, now he
is new. Now native to earth as I am, nailed
to my poor planet, caught that I might be free,
blind in my womb to know my darkness ended,
brought to this birth

for me to be new-born,
and for him to see me mended
I must see him torn.
Luci Shaw

- ◆ “Blessed is He Who was pierced and so removed the sword from the entry to Paradise.
Homilies on the Gospels () Bede the Venerable

- So, what is the Tree of Life and what is the Fruit on the Tree of Life?
- Read Luke 23:50-56.

- ◆ John 19:25-27

*But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing near, He said to His mother,
"Woman, behold, your son!"
Then He said to the disciple,
"Behold, your mother!"
And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.*

- ◆ Who is Bestman Juan?

- ◆ On the other hand he who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients, and will be concerned with prophecies; he will preserve the discourse of notable men and penetrate the subtleties of parables; he will seek out the hidden meanings of proverbs and be at home with the obscurities of parables. He will serve among great men and appear before rulers; he will travel through the lands of foreign nations, for he tests the good and the evil among men. He will set his heart to rise early to seek the Lord who made him, and will make supplication before the Most High; he will open his mouth in prayer and make supplication for his sins. If the great Lord is willing, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding; he will pour forth words of wisdom and give thanks to the Lord in prayer. He will direct his counsel and knowledge aright, and meditate on his secrets. He will reveal instruction in his teaching, and will glory in the law of the Lord's covenant. Many will praise his understanding, and it will never be blotted out; his memory will not disappear, and his name will live through all generations. Nations will declare his wisdom, and the congregation will proclaim his praise; if he lives long, he will leave a name greater than a thousand, and if he goes to rest, it is enough for him.

The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, 39:1-11

- ◆ “Our Father, ... deliver us from the Evil One ... deliver us from evil. Amen.”

Human nature is enslaved and held prisoner by the devil, who deludes it with wicked opinions and errors and incites it to all kinds of sins. Just as the devil cannot be conquered without God's help, so we cannot buy our way out of the slavery by ourselves. World history itself shows the great power of the devil's rule. Blasphemy and wicked doctrines fill the world, and by these bonds the devil has enthralled those who are wise and righteous in the eyes of the world. In others, even grosser vices appear. Christ was given to us to bear both sin and penalty and to destroy the rule of the devil, sin, and death; so we cannot know His blessings unless we recognize our evil.

Apology of the Augsburg Confession

Article II. Original Sin

- ◆ Read: John 19:30-33 – Mark 15:43-45 – 1 Peter 3:18-19 – Matthew 28:5-6 – 1 Corinthians 15:17-22.
- ◆ Christ is Risen! Risen indeed! Because He lives we also shall live!

Then Aslan stopped, and the children looked into the stream. And there, on the golden gravel of the bed of the stream, lay King Caspian, dead, with the water flowing over him like liquid glass. His long white beard swayed in it like water-weed. And all three stood and wept. Even the Lion wept: great Lion-tears, each tear more precious than the Earth would be if it was a single solid diamond. And Jill noticed that Eustace looked neither like a child crying, nor like a boy crying and wanting to hide it, but like a grown-up crying. At least, that is the nearest she could get to it; but really, as she said, people don't seem to have any particular ages on that mountain.

"Son of Adam," said Aslan, "go into that thicket and pluck the thorn that you will find there, and bring it to me."

Eustace obeyed. The thorn was a foot long and sharp as a rapier.

"Drive it into my paw, Son of Adam," said Aslan, holding up his right fore-paw and spreading out the great pad toward Eustace.

"Must I?" said Eustace.

"Yes," said Aslan.

Then Eustace set his teeth and drove the thorn into the Lion's pad. And there came out a great drop of blood, redder than all redness that you have ever seen or imagined. And it splashed into the stream over the dead body of the King. At the same moment the doleful music stopped. And the dead King began to be changed. ... and his eyes opened, and his eyes and lips both laughed, and suddenly he leaped up and stood before them -- a very young man, or a boy.

Eustace made a step toward him with both hands held out, but then drew back with a startled expression.

"Look here! I say," he stammered. "It's all very well. But aren't you -- ? I mean didn't you --"

"Oh, don't be such an ass," said Caspian.

"But," said Eustace, looking at Aslan. "Hasn't he -- er -- died?"

"Yes," said the Lion in a very quiet voice, almost (Jill thought) as if he were laughing. "He has died. Most people have, you know. Even I have. There are very few who haven't."

The Silver Chair () C. S. Lewis

- ◆ The artwork on page 188 is a depiction of Luke 24:13-16. The risen sun behind the man on the road from being recognized by the two in the foreground.

- ◆ "The Bridegroom Lives Who Once Was Dead"

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tune *Was Gott tut* Severus Gastorius, 1681

The Bridegroom lives who once was dead
Raised from a grave most lowly;
And of His Church He is the Head:
She's purified and holy.
For her He died-
Was crucified.
His blood has cleansed her stain
No spot of sin remains.

The Bridegroom lives and, present, cares-

Absolves His bride, most cherished;
In love His blood and body shares
To keep her fed and nourished.
She lives betrothed-
Washed, fed and clothed;
His faithfulness enduring,
His cross her life securing.

The bride in thanks for being won
Receives her Groom's commission.
She prays, "My Lord, Thy will be done,"
And lives thus in submission.
Her loving Lord
Does by His Word
Her sins and failings banish,
That spot and wrinkle vanish.

Though persecuted on the way
And scattered through the nations
The bride awaits her wedding day,
Her heavenly presentation.
To life she'll rise
And with her eyes
Behold her Groom victorious,
His unveiled visage glorious.

Timothy J. Pauls

Chapter 25 – The City of the Lions

- ◆ *I protest, brethren, by my pride in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? 1 Corinthians 15:31-32*
- ◆ Communing with Christ while being offered to the beasts ...

The blessed Blandina last of all, like a noble mother that has encouraged her children and sent them before her crowned with victory to the King, retracing herself also all her children's battles hastened towards them, rejoicing and triumphing in her departure, as though she were called to a marriage supper, instead of being cast to the beasts. After the whips, after the beasts, after the frying-pan, she was thrown at last into a net, and cast before a bull. And after being tossed for some long time by the beast, having no further sense of what was happening because of her hope and hold on the things she had believed, and because of her communing with Christ, she was herself also offered up, the very heathen confessing that they had never known a woman endure so many and so great sufferings. ...

They asked for life, and He gave it them, which they shared with their neighbours, and departed to God all ways victorious. Having loved peace ever, and ever commended peace to us, they went in peace to God, leaving no sorrow to their Mother, nor strife and war to their brethren, but joy and peace and concord and love.

Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia () I:55-56 & II:7.

- ◆ Polycarp: In Christ's Service for 86 years ...

“Take the oath and I will let you go; revile Christ.” Polycarp replied, “I have served Him eighty-six years and in no way has He dealt unjustly with me; so how can I blaspheme my King Who saved me?” ... “I am a Christian. If you want to learn the teaching of Christianity, name the day and her.” ... The proconsul said: “I have wild beasts; I will throw you to them unless you change your mind.” He replied, “Call for them; for a change from better to worse is impossible for us; but it is laudable to change from evil to good.”

The Martyrdom of Polycarp (AD 70-156)

- ◆ But let no one eat or drink from your Eucharist except those who are baptized in the Lord’s Name. For the Lord also has spoken concerning this: “Do not give what is holy to dogs.”

The Didache (AD 120-180)

- ◆ During these eight chapter, note the description of the box at the end of the bestman’s chain stole.

- Chapter 25 — the modest wooden box (page 191)
- Chapter 26 — _____
- Chapter 27 — _____
- Chapter 28 — _____
- Chapter 29 — _____
- Chapter 30 — _____
- Chapter 31 — _____
- Chapter 32 — _____

Chapter 26 – The City of the Caves

- ◆ *For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Timothy 4:6-8*

- ◆ Nero set up as the culprits and punished with the utmost refinement of cruelty a class hated for their abominations, who are commonly called Christians. Christus, from whom their name is derived, was executed at the hands of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. ... Beside being put to death they were made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clad in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others set on fire to serve to illuminate the night.

The Annales by the historian Tacitus (AD 55-117)

- ◆ We also know that what was said of Abel, when he was slain by the wicked murderer Cain, is suitable for all whose blood has been shed wickedly. Let us suppose that the verse “The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground” is said as well for each of the martyrs, the voice of whose blood cries to God from the ground.

Exhortation to Martyrdom () Origen

- ◆ Let us realize how near He is, and that none of our thoughts or any of the rationalizations in which we indulge escape Him. Hence it is right that we should not desert from His will. Far better to offend foolish and thoughtless men who exalt themselves and take pride in their pretentious utterance than to offend God. Let us revere the Lord Jesus Christ Whose Blood was given for us; let us respect our rulers, honor our elders, train our youth in the discipline of the fear of God, guide our wives toward what is good.

The Letter of Clement of Rome to Corinth (AD 92-101)

- ◆ Liturgical Note __: The loving practice of Closed Communion and the clear speaking of the Words of Institution (*Verba*) have been the practice of the New Testament Christian Church from the time that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during in the upper room. The Church has neither the desire to depart from such a practice nor the right to neglect the Word of the Lord. Just as *It is the LORD's Passover (Exodus 12:11)*, at the Meal given to the people of God in the Old Testament Church, so also it is the LORD's Supper in the New Testament Church.

And this food is called among us the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His Word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood;" and gave it to them alone.

From an apology (defense) of a Gentile named Justin (AD 110-165) written to the Emperor Titus Ælius Adrianus Antoninus Pius Augustus Cæsar, his sons, the Senate and the whole people of the Romans. He was martyred under the reign of Marcus Aurelius and is known in the Church as Justin Martyr (*I Apology 66*).

- 🕒 Timeline Check – Where and when are we?

Chapter 27 – The City of the Swan

- ◆ *I will also speak of Thy testimonies before kings, and shall not be put to shame (Psalm 119:46).*
- ◆ When the fagots had been piled around Huss, the duke of Bavaria begged the doomed man, for the last time, to recant. "No," firmly replied the martyr, "I have never preached any false doctrine; and that which I have taught with my lips, I will now seal with my blood."
John Huss (AD 1370-1415) (Unconfirmed quote concerning this man condemned at the Council of Constance: Huss is reported to have said, "Cook this goose [huss] and God will raise up a swan.)
- ◆ *From a sermon by the swan ...*

We should note very carefully that the Lord Jesus orders Christians and gives them authority to be judges over all doctrine, to pronounce judgement on whether it is correct or not. This authority was filched from us by false Christians for something like a thousand years, so that we had no authority to pronounce judgement on any doctrine but simply had to accept, without expressing any judgement whatever the pope and the councils determined.

This Gospel completely overthrows the papacy and all councils. We are not obliged to accept what the pope enjoins or what men set up. Therefore I say once more, take careful note of this Gospel. Neither the pope nor the councils have received the command to set up and determine what faith is. Christ says here, "*Beware of false prophets.*" Either the Gospel must be lying, or the pope with the councils.

- ◆ Who is Hanson? That is, who is Hans' son?
- ◆ From the 2nd Martin ...

The prophets foretold that the preaching under the new covenant would have its own name. And the apostles say that the Gospel was promulgated with the coming of Christ. In this way the distinction between the promise and the Gospel can be usefully employed. For they believed in the Messiah who was to come, and we in the One who has been manifested.

But when we are speaking of the subject itself, it is certain that the doctrine of gracious reconciliation, of the remission of sins, of righteousness, salvation, and eternal life through faith for the sake of the Mediator is one and the same in the Old and in the New Testament. This is a useful rule which we must retain at all costs: The doctrine, wherever we read it, in either the Old or the New Testament, which deals with the gracious reconciliation and the remission of sins through faith for the sake of God's mercy in Christ, is the Gospel.

Justification — The Chief Article of Christian Doctrine as Expounded in "Locis Theologici" (exact date unknown)
Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586) translated by J.A.O. Preus, p. 38.

Chapter 28 – The City of the Doubters

- ◆ *For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law (Romans 3:28).*
- ◆ If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than trust in Divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this trust alone by which we are justified, let him be anathema (cursed).
Council of Trent, Session 6, Canon 12 (AD 1545-1563)
- ◆ We teach that such a certainty of faith is required in the Gospel; our opponents leave consciences wavering and uncertain. Consciences do nothing from faith if they always doubt whether they have forgiveness. In such doubt how can they call upon God, how can they be sure that He hears them? So their whole life is without God and without the true worship of God.
The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (AD 1531)
- ◆ We also believe, teach, and confess that, although the genuinely believing and truly regenerated persons retain much weakness and many shortcomings down to their graves, they still have no reason to doubt either the righteousness which is reckoned to them through faith or the salvation of their souls, but they must regard it as certain that for Christ's sake, on the basis of the promises and the Word of the holy Gospel, they have a gracious God.
The Formula of Concord (AD 1577)
- ◆ *For thus says the LORD,*
“Behold, I will extend prosperity
to her like a river,
and the wealth of the nations
like an overflowing stream;
and you shall suck,
you shall be carried upon her hip,
and dandled upon her knees.”
Isaiah 66:12

- ◆ A certain philosophy ...

There is, we are aware, a philosophy that denies the infinite. There is also a philosophy classed pathologically, which denies the sun; this philosophy is called blindness.

To set up a sense we lack as a source of truth, is a fine piece of blind man's assurance.

And the rarity of it consists in the haughty air of superiority and compassion which is assumed towards the philosophy which sees God, by this philosophy that has to grope its way. It makes one think of a mole exclaiming: "How they excite my pity with their prate about a sun!"

There are, we know, illustrious and mighty atheists. These men, in fact, led round again towards truth by their very power, are not absolutely sure of being atheists; with them, the matter is nothing but a question of definitions, and, at all events, if they do not believe in God, being great minds, they prove God.

Les Misérables (1862) Victor Hugo (), page 450.

- ◆ Is the fear of God not existing greater than the fear of God existing?

Don Paolo Spada the disguised priest who really was a wanted revolutionary named Pietro Spina listens to a boy speak:

"I must confess," the boy continued, "that my religious faith has never been very deep. I never believed very strongly. I was baptized, confirmed, took communion like the others. But my faith in the reality of God was very vague and intermittent. For this reason I did not oppose the so-called scientific theories which were propagated in the groups. These theories began to seem too comfortable to me. That everything was matter, that the idea of good was inseparable from utility (albeit social utility) and was sustained only by punishment became insupportable to me. Who was to do the punishing? The state, the group, or public opinion? And what if the state, the group, or public opinion are immoral? And then, if favorable circumstances or the appropriate technique make it possible to do wrong with certain impunity, what is morality based upon? I asked myself whether technique by eliminating every danger of sanctions could destroy the distinction between good and evil. I was afraid of such a hypothesis. I really began to be afraid of the absurd. I don't want to bore you with these digressions, which might seem abstract to you; nor would I want you to think I am trying to justify myself with moralistic chatter. No, these reflections had become the substance of my life. I didn't believe in God any more, but I began to want God to exist with all my being. I had need of Him to escape the fear of chaos." *Bread and Wine* (1936) Ignazio Silone () page 244.

- ◆ Compare the episode of Rudy in Chapter 28 with the following:

... *It* was invisible.

But then, when he was moving something himself, his wife would say: "Let the servants do it. You will hurt yourself again." And suddenly *It* would flash through the screen and he would see it. It was just a flash, and he hoped it would disappear, but he would involuntarily pay attention to his side. "It sits there as before, gnawing just the same!" And he could no longer forget *It*, but could distinctly see it looking at him from behind the flowers. "What is it all for?"

"It really is so! I lost my life over that curtain as I might have done when storming a fort. Is that possible? How terrible and how stupid. It can't be true! It can't, but it is."

He would go to his study, lie down, and again be alone with *It*: face to face with *It*. And nothing could be done with *It* except to look at it and shudder.

The Death of Ivan Ilych (1886) Leo Tolstoy () p. 134.

Chapter 29 – The City of the Reasoners

- ◆ *This is My Body (Matthew 26:26).*
- ◆ From a “reasonable” teacher named John Calvin. According to Calvin, in order to partake of the Body of Christ we must go to heaven where Jesus is located after His Ascension. ☹ ; Warning: false doctrine in the following paragraph!

- ◆ ... the only way to dispose our souls to receive nourishment, relief, and quickening of His substance, is to lift up our minds by faith above all things worldly and sensible, and thereby enter into heaven, that we may find and receive Christ where He dwelleth.

John Calvin (AD 1536)

- ◆ In accord with the simple words of Christ’s testament, we hold and believe in a true, though supernatural, eating of Christ’s Body and drinking of His Blood, which we cannot comprehend with our human sense or reason. Here we take our intellect captive in obedience to Christ, as we do in other articles also, and accept this mystery in no other way than by faith and as it is revealed in the Word.

The Formula of Concord (AD 1577)

- ◆ The worst offenders in this respect are the so-called rationalistic preachers, who with diabolical audacity mount Christian pulpits and instead of preaching Christ, the Savior, to all sinners, recite their miserable moral precepts for a virtuous life and fill the ears of the people with their empty bombast.

C.F.W. Walther (AD 1885)

- ◆ A parishioner from George MacDonald’s *A Quiet Neighborhood...*

Before me stood a tall old man with his hat in his hand. He smoothed his short gray hair over his forehead as he stood. His face was hued red-brown from much exposure to the weather. There was a certain look of roughness (without hardness) in it, which spoke of endurance rather than resistance, although he could evidently set his face as a flint. His features were large and a little coarse, but the smile that parted his lips when he spoke shone in his gray eyes as well, and lighted up a countenance in which a man might trust. "I wanted to see yer face, Sir, if you'll not take it amiss."

"Certainly not," I answered, pleased with the man's address, as he stood square before me, looking as modest as he was fearless. "The sight of a man's face is what everybody has a right to -- but, for all that, I should like to know why you want to see my face."

"Why, Sir, you be the new vicar. you kindly told me so when I axed you."

"Well, then, you'll see my face on Sunday in church -- that is, if you happen to be there."

"Yes, Sir. But you see, Sir, on the bridge here, the parson is the parson like, and I'm Old Rogers. And I looks in his face, and he looks in mine, and I says to myself, 'This is my parson.' But o' Sundays he nobody's parson. He's got his work to do, and it mun be done, and there's an end on't" (p. 9).

Chapter 30 – The City of the Battle Ground

- ◆ 🕒 Timeline Check – Where and when are we?
- ◆ *There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death (Proverbs 14:12).*
- ◆ From “Learning How To Die” by Chaplain Ervin C. Rodehorst – France, 1944 ...

I also served a few evacuated German soldiers. I was called to a neighboring hospital to

minister to a dying German soldier one night, since I was the only chaplain in that vicinity who could speak German. When I entered the ward, I found it filled with German soldiers who had little hope of recovery. The odor from their gangrenous wounds was frightful.

I hadn't anticipated being there long, but I didn't leave until the wee hours of the morning. Every time I moved toward the door, someone would halt me with another *Herr Pfarrer!* from some other bed. Most of the men wanted me to speak to them. They sought comfort and asked me to forward final messages to their loved ones.

Here's a typical message and confession I hear that evening. I think it can change how we view the enemy:

Dear parents, brothers, and sisters,

I'm no longer able to write myself, for my wound has become worse. My stump (leg amputated above the knee) is infested with maggots, and it was operated on many times. The rawness of the wound and gangrenous infection has spread clear to my back and my abdomen. My whole back is so sore I can hardly lie on it. My whole condition inside and outside lets me know there is no hope for me.

I'd like to come home and be at home once more above all else. I'd like to repay you in some way for all you've done for me. I'd like to assume the burden of the business. If there were possible I'd work from early in the morning till late at night. You know that I'm physically able to do so when I am well. But, unfortunately, providence has planned otherwise.

Humanly, I am deeply discouraged over this fact, but from the spiritual angle I want you to be comforted. A minister of the Gospel is at my bedside. I acknowledge and have confessed my sinfulness to him, and he has pronounced the absolution of all my sins. As a double assurance, I've received the Sacrament of Holy Communion. May that serve as a comfort to you in this great hour of trial. God bless you, dear parents, brothers, and sisters.

Your loving son,
Fritz

They Shall Not March Along — Glimpses into the Life and History of the Chaplaincy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (1990) edited by Chaplain M. S. Ernstmeyer, US Navy, Retired, page 75.

◆ The "future" during the times of war ...

"It is important, I think, to realise that the future does not exist 'in the future', vaguely and far off, but here and now. Second by second it is upon us, and every moment in our lives is a fresh beginning. The end of one civilisation is the beginning of another, and it is the men who are living through the collapse of the first who will decide the nature of the second. When things look dark and difficult, there is a very natural tendency to procrastinate -- to push the future away into the future. 'We can't do anything about it now,' we say; 'when the war is over it will be time to begin.' This will not do. Whatever it is we are fighting for, now is the time to see about getting it. Otherwise, when the war is over, we shall find ourselves unprepared, and the aim we set out to achieve will remain exactly where we put it -- far away in the future. Indeed, it is not too much to say that, whoever wins the war, the peace will be won by those who, throughout the struggle, remained alert and ready, with a clear idea of what they wanted and an active plan for bringing it about."

"While a war is going on it is, of course, more difficult for the peace-minded to remain hopeful and energetic than it is for the war-minded. The general atmosphere is unfavourable to quiet, constructive thought, the whole nation is organised and directed towards the immediate object of getting the war

fought, destruction appears far more urgent and important than construction, and any effort at planning for the new order is made to appear untimely and out of place. We ask ourselves, 'What is the use of making schemes that may never be wanted?' The answer is that they are wanted, that we want them now, and that if we want a thing badly enough, we can make it happen. If we let ourselves be discouraged, that is a proof that our wanting was inadequate, and that the future lies in the hands of those who, more energetically, wanted something different." [pages 11-12].

Begin Here (1939) Dorothy L. Sayers

- ◆ Liturgical Note __: The Divine Service is not an adiaphoron. The aim of contemporary worship is away from Word and Sacrament.

The idea of fixed parts in the liturgy became increasingly distasteful to the Pietists. 'Extempore prayer was substituted for the church prayer; the objective church hymn gave way to hymns descriptive of the soul's changing conditions, experiences, and feelings; ... The sacramental and the sacrificial were divorced, and the sacrificial alone remained.'

... The church became a mere lecture hall, not only in Germany, but in all countries where the germs of Rationalism were disseminated. ... Fixed prayers were no longer recognized, not even those whose text is found in Scriptures; the old Lutheran hymns were mutilated beyond recognition.

A service, however, which offered to the congregations nothing but insipid hymns, dry and bombastic prayers, and a tedious sermon which was often a mere twaddle concerning matters of the daily civil and domestic life, which edified none and, at best, had little practical value, was bound to make the churches empty.

And the humiliating fact in connection with this review is this, that in spite of all reconstruction across the sea some of the Pietistic and Rationalistic leaven still clings to the Lutheran services in many parts of our country. It is only by continued effort and patient education that the last remnants of this sad period in the history our Church may be removed.

Christian Art (1921) Paul E. Kretzmann

- ◆ Synergism is a false practice based upon false doctrine that seeks to give man credit for his salvation:

Fridfeldt seated himself on the sofa. He felt that he must not put off confessing where he stood. This strange old man with his brandy and his soldiers should at least learn what kind of assistant he had gotten.

"I just want you to know from the beginning, sir, that I am a believer," he said. His voice was a bit harsh.

He saw a gleam in the old man's eyes which he could not quite interpret. Was approval indicated, or did he have something up his sleeve?

The rector put the lamp back on the table, puffed at his pipe, and looked at the young man a moment before he spoke.

"So you are a believer, I'm glad to hear that. What do you believe in?"

Fridfeldt stared dumfounded at his superior. Was he jesting with him?

"But, sir, I am simply saying that I am a believer."

"Yes, I hear that, my boy. But what is it that you believe in?"

"Fridfeldt was almost speechless.

"But don't you know, sir, what it means to be a believer?"

"That is a word which can stand for things that differ greatly, my boy. I ask only what it is that *you* believe in."

"In Jesus, of course," answered Fridfeldt, raising his voice. "I mean -- I mean that I have given Him my heart."

The older man's face became suddenly as solemn as the grave.

"Do you consider *that* something to give Him?"

By this time, Fridfeldt was almost in tears.

"But sir, if you do not give your heart to Jesus, you cannot be saved."

"You are right, my boy. And it is just as true that, if you think you are saved because you give Jesus your heart, you will not be saved. You see, my boy," he continued reassuringly, as he continued to look at the young pastor's face, in which uncertainty and resentment were shown in a struggle for the upper hand, "it is *one thing* to choose Jesus as one's Lord and Savior, to give Him one's heart and commit oneself to Him, and that He now accepts one into His little flock; it is a very different thing to believe on Him as a Redeemer of sinners, of whom one is chief. One does not choose a Redeemer for oneself, you understand, nor give one's heart to Him. The heart is a rusty old can on a junk heap. A fine birthday gift, indeed! but a wonderful Lord passes by, and has mercy on the wretched tin can, sticks His walking cane through it and rescues it from the junk pile and takes it home with Him. That is how it is."

Hammer of God (AD 1960) Bo Giertz

🕒 Timeline Check – Where and when are we?

Chapter 31 – The City of the Messengers

- ◆ As you read through this chapter and the next, ponder your answer to this question: Imagine that the book, *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding*, is a timeline. What page do you think we are at now?
- ◆ The sign at the entrance to this city invites all persons to enter a time and space ...

Where objective truth varies according to personal opinion.

Where corporate reality is defined according to individual concept.

This is the land of the tolerant and the home of the permissive.

Intolerance is not tolerated.

There are absolutely no absolutes

Please, dear person, enter and indulge yourself.*

In this postmodern age, what do you suppose, think, want, and/or feel that the ↗*↖ means?

- ◆ Read Revelation 2:18-25.
- ◆ The world is still deceived with "ornament."

In law, what plea so tainted and and corrupt,
but, being season'd with a gracious voice,
obscures the show of evil?

In religion, what gross error,
but some somber brow will bless it,

and approve it with a text,
hiding the grossness with fair ornament.”
The Merchant of Venice () William Shakespeare

- ◆ The “ornament” in the law of the land ...

If there are signs that we have become less concerned than we should be with virtue, there are also signs that many Americans are becoming restless under the tyrannies of egalitarianism and sick of the hedonistic individualism that has brought us to the suburbs of Gomorrah. But, for the immediate future, what we probably face is an increasingly vulgar, violent, chaotic, and politicized culture. Our hopes, our struggles, and our optimism must be for the long run. The first requisite is knowing what is happening to us.

Slouching Towards Gomorrah () Robert H. Bork (p. 342)

- ◆ The “ornament” in the sanctuary of the LORD ...

They have healed the wound of My people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown," says the LORD (Jeremiah 6:14-15).

- ◆ Reformation is a continuing activity within the Church ...

Aurelio, Bishop of Valenta speaking to Blaise:

"You have lived too long in Rome, my friend. You have forgotten that the Church is a family of the faithful, not simply a bureaucracy of believers. It's a sign of the times — one of the less hopeful signs. This is the century of the machine and the Church has conceded too much to it. They have timeclocks in the Vatican now and adding machines and ticker tape to tally the stock market."

The Devil's Advocate (1959) Morris L. West () page 73.

- ◆ Same old Manna! Or, as an arch-devil writes to his apprentice nephew ...

My dear Wormwood,

The real trouble about the set your patient is living in is that it is *merely* Christian. They all have individual interests, of course, but the bond remains mere Christianity. What we want, if men become Christians at all, is to keep them in the state of mind I call “Christianity And.” You know — Christianity and the Crisis, Christianity and the New Psychology, Christianity and the New Order, Christianity and Faith Healing, Christianity and Psychical Research, Christianity and Vegetarianism, Christianity and Spelling Reform. If they must be Christians, let them at least be Christians with a difference. Substitute for the faith itself some Fashion with a Christian colouring. Work on their horror of the Same Old Thing.

The horror of the Same Old Thing is one of the most valuable passions we have produced in the human heart — an endless source of heresies in religion, folly in counsel, infidelity in marriage, and inconstancy in friendship. The humans live in time, and experience reality successively. To experience much of it, therefore, they must experience many different things; in other words, they must experience change. And since they need change, the Enemy (being a hedonist at heart) has made change pleasurable to them, just as He has made eating pleasurable. But since He does not wish them to make change, any more than eating, an end in itself, He has balanced the love of change in them by a love of

permanence. He has contrived to gratify both tastes together in the very world He has made, by that union of change and permanence which we call Rhythm. He gives them the seasons, each season different yet every year the same, so that spring is always felt as a novelty yet always as the recurrence of an immemorial theme. He gives them in His Church a spiritual; they change from a fast to a feast, but it is the same feast as before.

Now, just as we pick out and exaggerate the pleasure of eating to produce gluttony, so we pick out this natural pleasantness of change and twist it into demand for absolute novelty. This demand is entirely our workmanship.

The Screwtape Letters (1959) C.S. Lewis, Letter XXV

- ◆ Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5 — 2 Peter 3:3-4 — 1 Corinthians 4:9-16 — Acts 20:28-30
- ◆ What is the message for the pastor on page 245-246?
- ◆ Liturgical Note _: Consider the following quotes in light of what you have just read in this chapter.

From Jane Austin:

Miss Bingley's attention was quite as much engaged in watching Mr. Darcy's progress through his book, as in reading her own; and she was perpetually either making some inquiry, or looking at his page. She could not win him, however, to any conversation; he merely answered her question and read on. At length, quite exhausted by the attempt to be amused with her own book, which she had only chosen because it was the second volume of his, she gave a great yawn and said, 'How pleasant it is to spend an evening in this way! I declare, after all, there is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of anything than of a book! When I have a house of my own, I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library!'

No one made any reply. She then yawned again, threw aside her book, and cast her eyes round the room in quest of some amusement; when, hearing her brother mentioning a ball to Miss Bennet, she turned suddenly towards him and said,—

'By the bye, Charles, are you really serious in meditating a dance at Netherfield? I would advise you, before you determine on it, to consult the wishes of the present party; I am much mistaken if there are not some among us to whom a ball would be rather a punishment than a pleasure.'

'If you mean Darcy,' cried her brother, 'he may go to bed, if he chooses, before it begins; but as for the ball, it is quite a settled thing, and as soon as Nicholls has made white soup enough I shall send round my cards.'

'I should like balls infinitely better,' she replied, 'if they were carried on in a different manner; but there is something insufferably tedious in the usual process of such a meeting. It would surely be much more rational if conversation instead of dancing made the order of the day.'

'Much more rational, my dear Caroline, I daresay; but it would not be near so much like a ball.'

Pride and Prejudice () Jane Austin (1775-1817), chapter 10.

From Dorothy Sayers:

"Any stigma," said a witty tongue, "will do to beat a dogma"; and the flails of ridicule have been brandished with such energy of late on the threshing floor of controversy that the true seed of the Word has become well-nigh lost amid the whirling of chaff.

Christ, in His Divine innocence, said to the Woman of Samaria, "Ye worship ye know not what" — being apparently under the impression that it might be desirable, on the whole, to know what one was worshipping. He thus showed Himself sadly out of touch with the twentieth-century mind, for the cry today is: "Away with the tedious complexities of dogma — let us have the simple spirit of worship; just worship, no matter of what!" The only drawback to this demand for a generalized and

undirected worship is the practical difficulty of arousing any sort of enthusiasm for the worship of nothing in particular

It would not perhaps be altogether surprising if, in this nominally Christian country, where the Creeds are daily recited, there were a number of people who knew all about Christian doctrine and disliked it. It is more startling to discover how many people there are who heartily dislike and despise Christianity without having the faintest notion what it is. If you tell them, they cannot believe you. I do not mean that they cannot believe the doctrine: that would be understandable enough, since it takes some believing. I mean that they simply cannot believe that anything so interesting, so exciting, and so dramatic can be the orthodox Creed of the Church.

Creed or Chaos? () Dorothy L. Sayers, pages 3-4

◆ C. S. Lewis, a confessed layman, ...

* addresses an assembly of Anglican priests and youth leaders:

It is not, of course, for me to define to you what Anglican Christianity is - I am your pupil, not your teacher. But I insist that wherever you draw the lines, bounding lines must exist, beyond which your doctrine will cease either to be Anglican or to be Christian: and I suggest also that the lines come a great deal sooner than many modern priests think. I think it is your duty to fix the lines clearly in your own minds: and if you wish to go beyond them you must change your profession.

This is your duty not specially as Christians or as priests but as honest men. There is a danger here of the clergy developing a special professional conscience which obscures the very plain moral issue. Men who have passed beyond these boundary lines in either direction are apt to protest that they have come by their unorthodox opinions honestly. In defence of their opinions they are prepared to suffer obloquy and to forfeit professional advancement. They thus come to feel like martyrs. But this simply misses the point which so gravely scandalizes the layman. We never doubted that the unorthodox opinions were honestly held: what we complain of is your continuing your ministry after you have come to hold them.

Christian Apologetics (1945) C.S. Lewis (essay in *God in the Dock*, pages 89-90).

* writes a letter to a friend, ...

Is this simply because the majority are hide-bound? I think not. They have a good reason for their conservatism. Novelty, simply as such, can have only an entertainment value. And they don't go to church to be entertained. They go to "use" the service, or, if you prefer, to "enact" it. Every service is a structure of acts and words through which we receive a sacrament, or repent, or supplicate, or adore. And it enables us to do these things best -- if you like, it "works" best -- when, through long familiarity, we don't have to think about it. As long as you notice, and have to count, the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don't notice. Good reading becomes possible when you need not consciously think about eyes, or light, or print, or spelling. The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God.

But every novelty prevents this. It fixes our attention on the service itself; and thinking about worship is a different thing from worshipping. The important question about the Grail was "for what does it serve?" "'Tis mad idolatry that makes the service greater than the god."

A still worse thing may happen. Novelty may fix our attention not even on the service but on the celebrant. You know what I mean. Try as one may to exclude it, the question "What on earth is he up to now?" will intrude. It lays one's devotion waste. There is really some excuse for the man who said, "I wish they'd remember that the charge to Peter was Feed my sheep; not

Try experiments on my rats, or even, Teach my performing dogs new tricks.

Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer (1963) C.S. Lewis, pages 4-5.

- * *Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism* (1959) was read to theological students at Cambridge. Truly, there is no more important and relevant work of C. S. Lewis in print today. As a self-proclaimed layman, Lewis takes on the host of clerical skeptics when he dismantles those who have bent the knee to the higher critical method of Biblical interpretation. This British bleating sheep exposes the pompous, shabby scholarship of Rudolph Bultmann, as well as silencing his doubting descendants from the sad Seminex lads of yesteryear to the legion of ostriches who makeup the Seminar today.

I'm sure if I had to produce picture-truths to a parishioner in great anguish or under fierce temptation, and produce them with that seriousness and fervour which his condition demanded, while knowing all the time that I didn't exactly — only in some Pickwickian sense — believe them myself, I'd find my forehead getting red and damp and my collar getting tight. But that is your headache, not mine. You have, after all, a different sort of collar. I claim to belong to the second group of outsiders: educated, but not theologically educated. How one member of that group feels I must now try to tell you. (*page 153*) ... These men ask me to believe they can read between the lines of the old texts; the evidence is their obvious inability to read (in any sense worth discussing) the lines themselves. They claim to see fern-seed and can't see an elephant ten yards away in broad daylight. (*page 157*)

- ◆ Discovered on a wall in Rome is a graffito believed to have been inscribed about AD 200. It depicts a crucified donkey (a human body with the head of an ass on a cross). There is another man standing and looking to this crucified one. The writing declares: "Alexa?? worships his god."

- * This will give some perspective for the following written by G. K. Chesterton ...

"It is my firm belief," replied Dorian Wimpole, sternly, "that you wanted to ride on it" (for indeed the Captain had once repeated his playful gesture of putting his large leg across). "Is not that so?"

"No," answered the Captain, innocently, "I never ride on a donkey. I'm afraid of it."

"Afraid of a donkey!" cried Wimpole, incredulously.

"Afraid of an historical comparison," said Dalroy.

There was a short pause, and Wimpole said coolly enough, "Oh, well, we've outlived those comparisons."

"Easily," answered the Irish Captain. "It is wonderful how easily one outlives someone else's crucifixion."

"In this case," said the other grimly, "I think it is the donkey's crucifixion."

"Why, you must have drawn that old Roman caricature of the crucified donkey," said Patrick Dalroy, with an air of some wonder. "How well you have worn; why, you look quite young! Well, of course, if this donkey is crucified, he must be uncrucified. But are you quite sure," he added, very gravely, "that you know how to uncrucify a donkey? I assure you it's one of the rarest of human arts. All a matter of knack. It's like the doctors with the rare diseases, you know; the necessity so seldom arises. Granted that, by the higher purposes of the cosmos, I am unfit to look after this donkey, I must still feel a faint shiver of responsibility in passing him on to you. Will you understand this donkey? He is a delicate-minded donkey. He is a complex donkey. How can I be certain that, on so short an acquaintance, you will understand every shade of his little likes and dislikes?"

The Flying Inn (1914) G. K. Chesterton, G.K. () pages 180-181.

- ◆ When the fashion displaces the telling of the Story then comes to pass what has come to pass in the Contemporary Worship, or as William Shakespeare noted in *Much Ado About Nothing*, ...

Beatrice

... he wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat; it ever changes with the next block. (*Act I, Scene 1*)

and again later ...

Borachio

Seest thou not, I say, what a deformed thief this fashion is? how giddily a' turns about all the hot bloods between fourteen and five-and-thirty? sometimes fashioning them like Pharoah's soldiers in the reechy painting, sometime like god Bel's priests in the old church-window, sometime like the shaven Hercules in the smirched worm-eaten tapestry, where his codpiece seems as massy as his club?

Conrade

All this I see; and I see that the fashion wears out more apparel than the man. But art not thou thyself giddy with the fashion too, that thou hast shifted out of thy tale into telling me of the fashion? (*Act III, Scene iii*)

- ◆ The two focal points of the Church:
Let it merely be said here that the doctrines of Justification and of the Real Presence are the two foci of the ellipse that symbolized the teaching and the life of the church of the Augsburg Confession.
Liturgy and Lutheranism (1948) Hermann Sasse () page 43.
- ◆ Liturgical Note __: In the Divine Service the Holy God is graciously present, yet hidden, as He serves His own in ways He has promised.

“The wind blow wherever it pleases,” says Jesus Himself. “You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). God’s Spirit is at work in the lives of every Christian, mysteriously changing the heart, acting with Word and Sacrament, ministering in trials and tribulations, creating someone who will stand before God in heaven as *holy*. But this process cannot be evident to the naked eye, nor can it be measured and tracked, nor is the Christian himself necessarily conscious of how far he has come. ...

Nor can we judge by appearances when we experience suffering or when God seems distant or rejecting, or not real at all. Nor can we judge by appearances when considering what is happening when water, bread, and wine are used in a church service, or when the pastor reads from a book and proclaims words from a pulpit. If we were to judge from appearances, we would scarcely have thought that this Jewish carpenter is actually God in the flesh. His being tortured to death at Golgotha, judged strictly by appearances, would be repulsive, a meaningless act of cruelty. We would never guess that it was the salvation of the whole world.

The Spirituality of the Cross (1999) Gene Edward Veith, Jr. (1951-) pages 68-69.

- ◆ *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

Why does St. James refer to those who fight as well as to those who lust as adulterers and adulteresses? [4:4] Against whom is this adultery committed? Since the word comes from *ad alter* which means "to another," therefore the greatest of all adulteries is that which turns from the heavenly Bridegroom, who is Christ. But if such a one is guilty of adultery, would it not be as adulteress against the Son of Man? For one who turns from the worship of Christ is an unfaithful bride. Then who is an adulterer, that is, an unfaithful husband? Surely this would then be an unfaithful pastor, who is supposed to be one standing in for Christ. So let all flee from earthly lust, whether as preachers or hearers, lest they become adulterers or adulteresses. For true faith does not lust after such pleasures as the earth can give, but rather, desires only Christ, the true Bridegroom, and the church, His true bride.

Burnell F. Eckhardt Tuesday of Trinity XVIII

- ◆ The bestman stands in the place of, but is not, the Bridegroom. The bestman is a servant, not a lord.

Another crass error stemmed from the fact (unless, indeed, the former grew out of this) that they called and regarded bishops and popes as the bridegrooms of the church. In verification of this view they cite the saying of St. Paul, "A bishop must be the husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2), that is to say, he must be the bishop of one church, as Christ is the bridegroom of one church; therefore they should not be bigamists. Popes and bishops, indeed, are fine fellows to be bridegrooms of the church - yes, if she were a brothel-keeper or the devil's daughter in hell. True bishops are servants of this bride, and she is lady and mistress over them. St. Paul calls himself *diaconus*, a "servant of the church" (1 Cor. 3:5). He does not claim to be the bridegroom or the lord of this bride, rather, the true and only bridegroom of this bride is called Jesus Christ, God's Son. St. John does not say, "I am the bridegroom," but, "I am the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, and who rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice," for "he who has the bride" (he says) "is the bridegroom" (John 3:29). One should gladly give ear to such speech and then conduct oneself as a servant.

() Martin Luther, vol. 41, 159-160

- ◆ Agree or Disagree?

"All the world's a stage,
and all the men and women merely players;
they have their exits and their entrances."

As You Like It () William Shakespeare

The moving finger writes;
and, having writ, moves on:
Nor all your piety
nor wit shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
nor all your tears wash out a word of it."

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

- ◆ We often discover that we are a part of the story ... the pages of which we neither may nor can turn back.

On the next page she came to a spell "for the refreshment of the spirit." The pictures were fewer here but very beautiful. And what Lucy found herself reading was more like a story than a spell. It went on for three pages and before she had read to the bottom of the page she had forgotten that she was reading at all. She was living in the story as if it were real, and all the pictures were real too. When she had got to the third page and come to the end, she said, "That is the loveliest story I've ever read or ever shall read in my whole life. Oh, I wish I could have gone on reading it for ten years. At least I'll read it over again."

But here part of the magic of the Book came into play. You couldn't turn back. The right-hand pages, the ones ahead, could be turned; the left-hand pages could not.

"Oh, what a shame!" said Lucy. "I did so want to read it again. Well, at least I must remember it. Let's see ... it was about ... about oh dear, it's all fading away again. And even the last page is going blank. This is a very queer book. How can I have forgotten? It was about a cup and a sword and a tree and a green hill. I know that much. But I can't remember and what *shall* I do?"

And she never could remember; and ever since that day what Lucy means by a good story is a story which reminds her of the forgotten story in the Magician's Book.

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader () C. S. Lewis

Chapter 32 – The City of the Clowns

- This chapter is different for at least one reason – we are in the midst of it while it is still ahead of us. That “now, yet, not yet” sounds goofy, but it is true. So, the City of the Clowns always fits on the time line from the Ascension of Jesus to His Final Return – as the present age and always a moment from us. In other words, the faithful in Thessalonica thought that the end was near and that Christ’s Return would be quite soon. Martin Luther expected it to take place at any minute. Many of us do as well.
- In this chapter of *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding* the walls of death are on both sides and converging. They are rising higher and blocking out the sun. The forces of the Evil One are in their final approach. Travel is measured in footsteps. “How long, O Lord,” is the cry of the faithful few.
- Where in the world is God?

The liturgical assembly is in the world, yet not of the world. Here heaven intersects with earth. And so, like Moses before us, we remove our shoes in the presence of God. We may speak and act a bit differently in the liturgy than we do ordinarily, but then we are in extraordinary circumstances. For the ground upon which we stand is holy ground. Whenever and wherever we step into the liturgy, we step on holy ground; we step into the presence of God.

Dying to Live — The Power of Forgiveness (1994) Harold Senkbeil () page 128.

- ◆ Where in the world is the Church?

As the Bride of Christ, the church is just as much a mystery, just as inaccessible to natural human reason, as her divine Bridegroom Himself. How then can we find her? As the first Eve was taken out of Adam’s side (Gen. 2), so the New Testament Eve receives her being from the Second Adam (Rom. 5:12-21), out of whose side flowed water and blood (John 19:34) — the very elements which together with His life-giving Spirit create His church (1 John 5:6-12). Those means by which the one church is created therefore — the pure Gospel and sacraments of Christ — are also the outward marks of recognition by which faith finds, identifies, and grasps His church locally. In this way full truth and unity are perfectly joined together.

Anatomy of an Explosion () Kurt E. Marquart () pages 24-25.

- ◆ The end of one civilization and the beginning of another ...

The dark age is likely to intervene anyway. It is very unusual for one moral order to slide into another with no intervening chaos. There are many other symptoms. The excessive interest in eroticism is characteristic of the end of a civilization, because it really means a growing impotence, and

a fear of impotence. Then the obsessive need for excitement, vicarious excitement, which of course the games provided for the Romans, and which television provides for our population. Even the enormously complicated structure of taxation and administration is, funnily enough, a symptom of the end of a civilization; these things become so elaborate that in the end they become insupportable because of their very elaboration. Above all, there is this truly terrible thing which afflicts materialist societies -- boredom; an obsessive boredom, which I note on every hand. Mine is, admittedly, a minority view; a lot of people think that we are just on the verge of a new marvelous way of life. I see no signs of it at all myself. I notice that where our way of life is most successful materially it is most disastrous morally and spiritually; that the psychiatric wards are the largest and most crowded, and the suicides most numerous, precisely where material prosperity is greatest, where most money is spent on education.

Jesus Rediscovered (1969) Malcolm Muggeridge () page 213.

- ◆ For a sweeping look at the LORD and His Church, read Revelation 12.
- ◆ The efficacy of the Word ...

When grown-up Betty, though the daughter of evil The Clerk and Lady Wallingford while always protected by a Divine hand, asked her nurse (Mrs. Plumstead) about her infancy, the nurse replied:

"Well, my dear," the old nurse went on and ever so faintly blushed, "as I say, I was younger then, and in a way I was in charge of you, and I was a little too fond of my own way and very obstinate in some things. And now I do not think it right. But you were such a dear little thing and I did once mention it to my lady, but she was very putting-off and only said, 'Pray, nurse, do not interfere' -- her ladyship and I **never** suited -- and I ought to have left it at that, I do think now, but I was obstinate, and then you were such a dear little thing, and it did seem such a shame, and so — " the old nurse said, unaware of the intensity of the silence in the room — "well, I christened you myself."

Betty's voice, like the rush of some waterfall in a river, answered, "It was sweet of you, nurse."

"No; it wasn't right," Mrs. Plumstead said. "But there it is. For I thought then that harm it couldn't do you and good it might — besides getting back on her ladyship: Oh I was a wicked woman — and one afternoon in the nursery, I got the water and I prayed God to bless it, though I don't know now how I dared, and I marked you with it, and said the Holy Name, and I thought, "Well, I can't get the poor dear godfathers and godmothers, but the Holy Ghost'll be her godfather and I'll do what I can.' And so I would have done, only soon after her ladyship and I didn't suit. But that's what happened, and you ought to know now you're a grown woman and likely to be married and have babies of your own."

All Hallows' Eve (1948) Charles Williams () p. 208-209

- ◆ Living in, with and under the Theology of the Cross.

[The country priest speaks to the woman still hurting over her little son who died in her arms.]

"She was trembling now. I seemed to be standing there alone between God and this tortured human being.

'Madam,' I said, 'if God were a pagan god or the god of intellectuals — and for me it comes to much the same — He might fly to His remotest heaven and our grief would force Him down to earth again. But you know that our God came to be among us. Shake your fist at Him, spit in His face, scourge Him, and finally crucify Him: what does it matter? *'My daughter, it's already been done to Him.'*" *The Diary of a Country Priest* (1937) Georges Bernanos () page 171.

- ◆ The invitation in the midst of the parching journey ...

"You might have noted also, all you capital Q gentry, *how* the inspired bride says, 'Come!' She is inviting all men to join in the cry: 'Let him that heareth say, Come! And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' If you had not been so proud of your tears, Countess Misericordia, you might have noted: She is not wallowing in her hope; she lives by it. She who is ready to share the water of life will give more mundane waters too. This dainty bride, this single-hearted and high-hearted girl, will have washed a dozen dirty babies and have kissed them too while you, Freiherr, are gathering statistics on the incidence of babies that need washing. While you, countess, weep hot salt tears, she will have given fresh water and cool to thirsty travelers." So far St. Paul.

The Waiting Bride of Christ () Martin Franzmann () from "Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets", page 74.

- ◆ Job 2:11-13 – Romans 5:1-5 – 1 Corinthians 2:1-2
- ◆ The significance of suffering ...

One of the worst results of the philosophy of Progress is that it has taken away the significance of suffering. If the aim of life is only to achieve complete happiness on earth, suffering is an unmixed evil, a dreadful, deplorable sign of failure. Modern thinkers, to judge by their novels, do think this. Their stories are as full of tragic events as "Othello" or "King Lear", but they produce none of the same feeling of tragic elevation. For tragic elevation arises from the belief that suffering, if taken in the right spirit, reveals as, nothing else can, the nature of the Universe. Lear is greater in his suffering than he ever could have been in his happiness. He faces the ills of the world and learns from them.

This is the Christian conception: according to Christian doctrine God suffered for us, and it is in suffering, if properly approached, that we come closest to Him. In most modern novels suffering merely distorts and depraves the character. Catastrophe in them is no more tragic than a street accident. The adoption of a more Christian view of suffering should make writers able to achieve a profundity of vision unattainable to them under the flattening influence of the philosophy of Progress.

True and False Values (March, 1940) Lord David Cecil

- ◆ God in the midst of suffering ...

The premise of this chapter and indeed of this whole book is that pastoral care consists not in removing someone's suffering but in helping the sufferer learn to interpret his or her sufferings in the light of the cross. Apart from the cross, the sufferer experiences a meaningless and out-of-control world that offers no hope. Such hopelessness makes sufferings people vulnerable to our world's desperate invitations to take matters into their own hands and, if all else fails, to eliminate suffering by eliminating the sufferer. This elimination of suffering people can be accomplished through neglect, abandonment, or even suicide and euthanasia. Anything to relieve the pain.

Although pastoral care is more a matter of helping people learn to interpret suffering than doing something to remove it, there are things pastors should do in order to help people live with their suffering - things such as baptizing, providing Holy Communion, praying, and reading Scripture. But even these pastoral doings presuppose the context of the cross of Christ. It is therefore the task of pastoral care to help the sufferer interpret all such "doings" in terms of the cross in the midst of a parishioner's suffering. Luther said, "He deserves to be called a theologian who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross." And pastors are first and foremost theologians, called to shed light on the darkness of suffering lives. We are, as pastors, stewards of the mysteries of God, whether we want to be or not.

Pastoral Care under the Cross - God in the Midst of Suffering () Richard C. Eyer

- ◆ Turn to page 256 in *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding* and study the picture. As you do, recall the

words of the 23rd Psalm ...

*The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want;
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.
He leadeth me beside the still waters;
He restoreth my soul.
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the Shadow of Death,
I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me.
Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a Table before me in the presence of mine enemies;
Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overfloweth.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;
and I will dwell in the House of the LORD forever.*

◆ Faithful Sam ...

Sam looked at him and wept in his heart, but no tears came to his dry and stinging eyes. 'I said I'd carry him, if it broke my back,' he muttered, 'and I will!'

'Come, Mr. Frodo!' he cried. 'I can't carry it for you but I can carry you and it as well. So up you get! Come on, Mr. Frodo dear! Sam will give you a ride. Just tell him where to go, and he'll go.'

As Frodo clung upon his back, arms loosely about his neck, legs clasped firmly under his arms, Sam staggered to his feet; and then to his amazement he felt the burden light. He had feared that he would have barely strength to lift his master alone, and beyond that he had expected to share in the dreadful dragging weight of the accursed Ring. But it was not so. Whether because Frodo was so worn by his long pains, wound of knife, and venomous sting, and sorrow, fear, and homeless wandering, or because some gift of final strength was given to him, Sam lifted Frodo with no more difficulty than if he were carrying a hobbit-child pig-a-back in some romp on the lawns or hayfields of the Shire. He took a deep breath and started off.

They had reached the Mountain's foot on its northern side, and a little to the westward; there its long grey slopes, though broken, were not sheer. Frodo did not speak, and so Sam struggled on as best he could, having no guidance but the will to climb as high as might be before his strength gave out and his will broke. On he toiled, up and up, turning this way and that to lessen the slope, often stumbling forward, and at the last crawling like a snail with a heavy burden on its back. When his will could drive him no further, and his limbs gave way, he stopped and laid his master gently down.

Frodo opened his eyes and drew a breath. It was easier to breathe up here above the reeks that coiled and drifted down below. 'Thank you, Sam,' he said in a cracked whisper. 'How far is there to go?'

'I don't know,' said Sam, 'because I don't know where we're going.'

He looked back and then he looked up; and he was amazed to see how far his last effort had brought him. The Mountain standing ominous and alone had looked taller than it was. Sam saw now that it was less lofty than the high passes of the Ephel Dúath which he and Frodo had scaled. The confused and tumbled shoulders of its great base rose for maybe three thousand feet above the plain, and above them was reared half as high again its tall central cone, like a vast oast or chimney capped with a jagged crater. But already Sam was more than half way up the base, and the plain of Gorgoroth was dim below him, wrapped in fume and shadow. As he looked up he would have given a shout, if his parched throat had allowed him; for amid the rugged humps and shoulders above him he saw plainly a path or road. It climbed like a rising girdle from the west and wound snakelike about the Mountain, until before it went round out of view it reached the foot of the cone upon its eastern side.

Sam could not see the course immediately above him, where it was lowest, for a steep slope

went up from where he stood; but he guessed that if he could only struggle on just a little way further up, they would strike this path. A gleam of hope returned to him. They might conquer the Mountain yet. 'Why, it might have been put there a-purpose!' he said to himself. 'If it wasn't there, I'd have to say I was beaten in the end.'

The path was not put there for the purposes of Sam. He did not know it, but he was looking at Sauron's Road from Barad-dûr to the Sammath Naur, the Chambers of Fire. Out from the Dark Tower's huge western gate it came over a deep abyss by a vast bridge of iron, and then passing into the plain it ran for a league between two smoking chasms, and so reached a long sloping causeway that led up onto the Mountain's eastern side. Thence, turning and encircling all its wide girth from south to north, it climbed at last, high in the upper cone, but still far from the reeking summit, to a dark entrance that gazed back cast straight to the Window of the Eye in Sauron's shadow-mantled fortress. Often blocked or destroyed by the tumults of the Mountain's furnaces, always that road was repaired and cleared again by the labours of countless orcs.

Sam drew a deep breath. There was a path, but how he was to get up the slope to it he did not know. First he must ease his aching back. He lay flat beside Frodo for a while. Neither spoke. Slowly the light grew. Suddenly a sense of urgency which he did not understand came to Sam. It was almost as if he had been called: 'Now, now, or it will be too late!' He braced himself and got up. Frodo also seemed to have felt the call. He struggled to his knees.

'I'll crawl, Sam,' he gasped.

Return of the King () J.R.R. Tolkien, pages 268-270.

- ◆ The friar to the bride in William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* ...

Come, lady, die to live.

This wedding day

Perhaps is but prolonged.

Have patience and endure.

(Act 4, Scene 1, lines 253-254)

- ◆ The Elect Lady ...

As I was sleeping, brethren, a revelation was given to me by a handsome young man who said to me, "That elderly lady, from whom you received the document, who do you think she is?"

I said, "The Sibyl."

"You are mistaken," said he, "she is not."

"Who then is she?" I said.

"The Church," he said.

I said to him, "Why then is she elderly?"

"Because," said he, "she was created first of all; that is why she is elderly; and for her the world was made."

The Shepherd of Hermas 8:1

- ◆ Mother Church ...

The spouse of Christ cannot be defiled; she is uncorrupted and chaste. She knows one home, with chaste modesty she guards the sanctity of one couch. She keeps us for God; she assigns the children whom she has created to the kingdom. Whoever is separated from the church and is joined with an adulteress is separated from the promises of the Church, nor will he who has abandoned the Church arrive at the rewards of Christ. He is a stranger; he is profane; he is an enemy. He cannot have God as a father who does not have the Church as a mother.

The Unity of the Catholic Church () St. Cyprian (chapter 6)

- ◆ Liturgical Note __: "... and He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead, Whose Kingdom shall have no end. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of saints; the forgiveness of sin; and the life everlasting. Amen."

"Outwardly the Church has no form or beauty. She outwardly bears the image of the earthly and is disfigured by the specter of the cross. Outwardly Christians appear to be the most wretched of people. Yet inwardly they are the loveliest of brides, the adornment, the crown with which Jesus is pleased. Inwardly the King's Bride is altogether glorious. Inwardly she has been cleansed by Christ's Blood, sanctified by the Spirit, and is clothed in Christ's innocence and righteousness."

The image of the Most Beautiful of human beings, the image of the Crucified, is imprinted on her. In the recesses of her heart glitters nothing but Christ's cross and Name. In God's sight she is *pure and beautiful and glorious within*. The Bride is *she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun (Song of Solomon 6,10)*. She is anointed also with oil and balsam, with the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit. She tastes the sweetness of the love and grace of the fire of tribulation. Her clothing is of gold, adorned in the virtues of Christ. As the elect of God, holy and beloved, she has put on the garments of warm compassion, kindness, patience, meekness, purity. *Thy plants are an orchard (Song of Solomon 4,13)*. The Bride radiates the beauty of the Bridegroom, and so the King is delighted with her beauty.

But this joy in the heart gushes over. The Bride, the Church, glories in her good fortune before all the world. *I will make Thy name to be remembered in all generations. (v. 17)* And the result is: *Therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever. (v. 17) Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. (v.16)* ... The Church acquires children. What she sings and says about Christ the King charms and attracts others to worship the Lord.

The remembrance of the Lord, the gratitude, the joy of the Bride, endures into eternity. On that day when the Bridegroom appears, she will be brought before Him and will enter into the King's heavenly palace. Then will she possess heavenly, eternal joy and bliss. Then will one openly experience joy. Then will the happiness of Jerusalem be made perfect. May God help us to attain it. Amen.

Sermon on Psalm 45 by Pastor Georg Stoeckhardt (1842-1913) page 58.

"I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star." The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the Water of Life without price. I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this Book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this Book, and if any one takes away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the Tree of Life and in the Holy City, which are described in this Book. He Who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen (Rev. 22:16-21).

- ◆ Now read Matthew 24:21-27

Chapter 33 – The Opening of the Portal

- ◆ The Bridegroom says: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock (Revelation 3:20)*.

Death is hideous to the wicked for the same reason that it is beautiful to the good; both must put off their humanity, but the just man is delivered from his body as from a prison, which the wicked man is torn from it as from a jail. At the last moment hell yawns before the sinful soul which has dreamed of

annihilation. It knocks anxiously at the dark portals of death; and it is not annihilation that answers.
Hans of Iceland (1823) Victor Hugo () page 185.

Chapter 34 – Pulling of the Red Thread

Do you remember the distant rumbling heard long ago in this story? The promise was made. It is God's promise. The promise is good. The promise is true. The promise is fulfilled.

Chapter 35 – Accounting of the Children

- ◆ Liturgical Note __: ... *that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10-11).*

The person through whom the whole salvation of God for our race has come and by whom it was achieved should also be the one to judge whether it has actually been accepted by people, or rejected by them.

On Being a Christian — a personal confession () Henry Hamaan (1988) p. 75.

Chapter 36 – Judging of the Bestmen

- ◆ Whether you be a bestman or another of the Bride's children, read the following slowly and carefully as you ponder the Word of the LORD God.
- ◆ The Lord makes the man a watchman to speak the Word – if he does? – if he doesn't? Ezek. 33:7-9.
- ◆ The requirements of Christ's undershepherds as His servants and stewards – 1 Corinthians 4:1-2.
- ◆ Upon whose head is the blood? – Acts 18:5-6.
- ◆ Paul addressing the elders at Ephesus – He is innocent of their blood – Acts 20:25-28.
- ◆ The faithful and wise steward is the one who tends to his Master's Word and work – Luke 12:40-48.
- ◆ The greater strictness in the judgment of the catechists – James 3:1.
- ◆ Men who will have to give account – Hebrews 13:17-18.
- ◆ Pastors need to hear the Word of Law and Gospel – 1 Corinthians 9:23-27.

Chapter 37 – Leading of the Blind

- ◆ Comedy or Tragedy?

A tragedy, according to Dante, is a story that begins in joy but ends in pain. A comedy, on the other hand, is a story that begins in pain, but ends in joy. ... his masterpiece is entitled *The Divine Comedy* ...

Both comedy and tragedy deal with the extremes of human experience, and both put suffering and joy in relationship to each other. In comedy, the pain is transformed by the ultimate joy. This comic perspective allows the audience to experience delight all the way through the story as they witness the characters obliviously moving from suffering to the joy that awaits them. In tragedy, the joy is transformed by the ultimate pain. The audience is chastened even by the characters' initial happiness, which from the tragic perspective becomes an ironic compounding of their doom.

Reading Between the Lines () Gene Edward Veith, pages 102-103.

- ◆ With these definitions in mind, decide whether each of the following is a comedy or a tragedy:

- * Little Red Riding Hood
- * Abraham
- * Romeo and Juliet
- * Job
- * King Saul
- * The three thieves crucified on Calvary (yes, three!)
- * Macbeth who, at the end of the play and his life, says:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Macbeth () William Shakespeare

- * The Character who said:

"I hold the world but a stage,
where every man must play a part,
and mine is a sad one."

The Merchant of Venice () William Shakespeare

- * The next person you meet.

◆ Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 and then ...

"Now, Bree," he said, "you poor, proud, frightened Horse, draw near. Nearer still, my son. Do not dare not to dare. Touch me. Smell me. Here are my paws, here is my tail, these are my whiskers. I am a true Beast."

"Aslan," said Bree in a shaken voice, "I'm afraid I must be rather a fool."

"Happy the Horse who knows that while he is still young. Or the Human either. Draw near, Aravis my daughter. See! My paws are velvety. You will not be torn this time."

"This time, sir?" said Aravis.

"It was I who wounded you," said Aslan. "I am the only lion you met in all your journeyings. Do you know why I tore you?"

"No, sir."

"The scratches on your back, tear for tear, throb for throb, blood for blood, were equal to the stripes laid on the back of your stepmother's slave because of the drugged sleep you cast upon her. You needed to know what it felt like."

"Yes, sir. Please--"

"Ask on, my dear," said Aslan.

"Will any more harm come to her by what I did?"

"Child," said the Lion, "I am telling you your story, not hers. No one is told any story but their own." Then he shook his head and spoke in a lighter voice.

"Be merry, little ones," he said. "We shall meet soon again."

The Horse and His Boy () C. S. Lewis [pages 215-216]

Chapter 38 – Speaking of the Chasm

Read Luke 16:19-31 and Revelation 19 & 20.

Chapter 39 – Whitening of the Robes

- ◆ After finishreading this chapter, read the following from the last book of the Narnian Chronicles ...

"It seems, then," said Tirian, smiling himself, "that the stable seen from within and the stable seen from without are two different places."

"Yes," said the Lord Digory. "Its inside is bigger than its outside."

"Yes," said Queen Lucy. "In our world too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world."

The Last Battle () C. S. Lewis, pages 176-177

- ◆ Look at Anisa's artwork on page 304. The trap on one end of the chain stole lies in front of the door on the house at the other end of the chain stole – the house that leads to the outside. Hmm. So, are you offended at it being the "outhouse"? You see, we are "inside" the story, that is, this world; Jesus is from the outside. The faithful await His Second Advent. Now look at the drawing on page 257. Does it depict a Theology of Glory or the Theology of the Cross? Now picture Jesus' words (addressed only to His own) in Revelation 3:20 – *Behold, I stand at the door and knock* (Jesus is "outside"); *if any one hears My Voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him, and he with Me.*

Chapter 40 – Smiling of the Bride

"But follow with thine eyes once more as I
Continue, and the great patricians note
Of this most just and pious sovereignty.

Those two on high, who, as thou canst make out,
Being nearest to Augusta, are most blest,
Of this our Rose are as a double root.

Upon her left is he, of all the rest
The father, whose bold taste cost him so dear,
Bequeathing to mankind such bitter taste.

Upon her right behold that reverend peer,
Father of Holy Church, who holds the keys
Of all the roseate joy assembled here.

And he who saw before his own decease
All the sad seasons of the lovely bride
Whom Christ with lance and nails had claimed as His,

Sits next to him; by Adam is the guide
Whose people, nurtured by the Lord on manna,
Were ingrate, fickle, mutinous beside.

Diagonal to Peter there see Anna,

Gazing upon her daughter in such content
Her look ne'er falters while she sings Hosanna."
The Divine Comedy, Paradise () Dante Alighieri

- Did you read of yourself in this 40th chapter of *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding*?
- And what of the books of the future ...

Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books. All contemporary writers share to some extent the contemporary outlook -- even those, like myself, who seem most opposed to it. Nothing strikes me more when I read the controversies of past ages than the fact that both sides were usually assuming without question a good deal which we should now absolutely deny. They thought that they were as completely opposed as two sides could be, but in fact they were all the time secretly united -- united *with* each other and *against* earlier and later ages -- by a great mass of common assumptions. We may be sure that the characteristic blindness of the twentieth century -- the blindness about which posterity will ask, "But how *could* they have thought that?" -- lies where we have never suspected it, and concerns something about which there is untroubled agreement between Hitler and President Roosevelt or between Mr. H. G. Wells and Karl Barth. None of us can fully escape this blindness, but we shall certainly increase it, and weaken our guard against it, if we read only modern books. Where they are true they will give us truths which we half knew already. Where they are false they will aggravate the error with which we are already dangerously ill. The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books. Not, of course, that there is any magic about the past. People were no cleverer then than they are now; they made as many mistakes as we. But not the *same* mistakes. They will not flatter us in the errors we are already committing; and their own errors, being now open and palpable, will not endanger us. Two heads are better than one, not because either is infallible, but because they are unlikely to go wrong in the same direction. To be sure, the books of the future would be just as good a corrective as the books of the past, but unfortunately we cannot get at them. (*xii-xiv*)

C. S. Lewis' 1946 Introduction to a translation of St. Athanasius' *On the Incarnation*,

- What are the last two words in *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding* (page 303)? _____

Here, then, Macarius, is our offering to you who love Christ, a brief statement of the faith of Christ and of the manifestation of His Godhead to us. This will give you a beginning, and you must go on to prove its truth by the study of the Scriptures.

On the Incarnation () St. Athanasius () chapter IX, page 89.

- The Beginning? Indeed, this is most certainly true. This is only the Beginning! 🕒

Take a look at that timeline of history that we have referred to throughout this guide (page 2). At the one end are Adam and Eve. Along the line are Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Malachi — thousands of years. Then the Son of God comes to be our Redeemer and, following His sin-atonement Death and triumphant Resurrection, is enthroned once more. The timeline continues and Ignatius, Athanasius, Huss, Luther and Sasse are born and born again. We are closer to our day as George Halder, Fred Jantz, Martha Riley and Emily Naher enter eternity. From one end to another there are thousands of years and we think that it is a long, long, long pi timeline.

Now try to imagine a timeline that is infinite in length. There is no end to it! That is eternal life in Paradise with the Lord. Compare the length of those two lines — the line of this world and the line of eternity. The history of this world is not even a molecule of water in the oceans when compared to everlasting life with God. Closer is the answer to 1 being divided by 0. This reality is expressed by the Apostle Paul who wrote: *I consider that the present sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).*

→ A benediction from a church father ...

As you continue journeying through the Scriptures and journeying through life toward our heavenly home, I am sure that your trip will take you on all sorts of roads. Like other Christians, including those described in Acts, I always have always found things easier when the Lord leads me on the interstate highways of life rather than on the gravel roads or the muddy ones. But I find it most important always to remember and cherish His promise. The footsteps of His presence, His forgiveness and blessing, have always been beside mine, even if they could not be seen with my human eyes.

In Christ, our good and gracious God gives this promise to you on your journey through life. Therefore, my heartfelt word for you is: “God bless always! God bless mightily!

To the Ends of the Earth (1997) Alvin L. Barry (1931-2001) pages 194-195.

→ A final declaration from the written Word spoken by the Word Himself as well as the response of the Bride which the Bridegroom has been answering throughout the ages ...

“Surely I come quickly.”

Amen.

Come, Lord Jesus!