

# A Translation Of Some Of Luther's "Summarien"

By Paul W. Peters

Luther began to write his *Summarien über die Psalmen* in the summer of 1531 and finished them, including all additions and corrections, in December of 1532.<sup>1</sup> The main purpose of these short summaries was to aid his German people in gaining a better understanding of his German Psalter, which he had reedited in 1531. A study of these *Summarien*, however, makes it quite apparent that not only the Christian layman but also the theologian can be greatly benefited by them. Luther had constantly applied himself to the Psalms even after the first translation of the Psalter had appeared in 1524. In 1525 he reedited "The Seven Penitential Psalms" and in 1529 and 1530 he worked on a goodly number of Psalms, among others the 118th Psalm, *Das schöne Confitemini* of 1529, and his lengthy exposition of the 117th Psalm in 1530. His interpretation of "The First 25 Psalms," however, which he dictated to Veit Dietrich at the Koburg in 1530, led up to his *Summarien über die Psalmen*.

In his work on these Psalms Luther already made use of a certain method which he applied throughout in his *Summarien*. This method consisted in finding the *scopus, argumentum und Nutz eines Psalmen*. Undoubtedly he had already applied this method prior to 1530. In his Table Talks he says: "When I began to apply myself to the Psalter ... and when I had the general content (*summam quandam*) and the application of the Psalm (*usum psalmi*), then I learned to make a study of the words."<sup>2</sup> Thus his Koburg interpretation of the 24th Psalm, for example, begins with the *summa* or the *argumentum* which reads: "This is a prophecy concerning the Gentiles how they are to be called in a mysterious manner (*occulte*) apart from the Law. Because of this call God abrogates (*abrogat*) the old law."<sup>3</sup>

Just as often Luther mentions the *scopus* of the Psalm. In Psalm 6 he lists the *scopus* of each one of the three preceding psalms, then designates the *scopus* of the 6th Psalm. We read: "The Third Psalm is on persecution, the Fourth on tribulation, and the Fifth on heresies... But this Sixth Psalm is on spiritual temptations, which our monks call the spirit of blasphemy, in that one is angry with God, because He does not satisfy one with what He does" (*dass einer mit unserm Herrn Gott zürnet, dass er es nicht recht macht*). This is the temptation of faith and hope, in which one is on the verge of despair (*dass einer nur verzweifeln will*).<sup>4</sup> In his interpretation of the Ninth Psalm, after a few introductory remarks on the title, Luther again begins with the *argumentum psalmi* and then adds the *scopus*, designating this Psalm as a Song of Thanksgiving and as a Prophecy of Victory.<sup>5</sup>

The third point in Luther's interpretation of the first 25 Psalms is the *Nutz eines Psalmen*, the *usus psalmi*, the use to which a Psalm may be put. Luther does this by telling the reader to which Commandment and Petition the Psalm belongs or from which Commandment or Petition it proceeds. Thus he begins his interpretation of the first verse of the First Psalm with the statement: "This First Psalm is in the First Commandment."<sup>6</sup> And in as far as the Fourth Psalm refers in a general way to all trials, it pertains to the First Commandment (*pertinet ad primum praeceptum*). In as far, however, as it contains admonitions, it pertains, he tells us, to the Third Commandment (*pertinet ad tertium praeceptum*), and its *scopus* is "that God must be invoked in all the vicissitudes of fortune."<sup>7</sup> The Fifth Psalm with its 11th verse: "But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice" treats the First Commandment (*tractat primum praeceptum*), and the final words of this

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1 St. Louis Edition, Vol. IV, 124–127; XXIIb, 1799; *Luthers Werke, Weimarer Ausgabe*, Vol. 38, 1–3. Unless otherwise designated, we are henceforth referring the reader to the volumes of the St. Louis Edition, also then when quoting from the Latin writings of Luther.

2 Weimarer Ausgabe, *Tischreden*, Vol. 4, 5008.

3 IV, 1560.

4 IV, 1398.

5 IV, 1428.

6 IV, 1357.

7 IV, 1378.

11th verse: “Let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee” revert again to the First Commandment (*respicit rursum ad primum praeceptum*).<sup>8</sup>

In his *Summarien* Luther consistently applies this threefold method of designating the *scopus*, the *argumentum*, and the *usus psalmi*. Only after his discussion of Psalm 31 does he cease to mention the latter point.

The *scopus* heads every one of the 150 Psalms. It is worded according to the classification that he presents to his readers in the introduction to the *Summarien* entitled *Ursachen des Dolmetschens*. Here Luther divides the Psalter into five different groups or classes of Psalms. His first class consists of the *promissiones et minae*,<sup>9</sup> promises rendered to the pious and threatenings directed at the ungodly, as he himself defines them. They are Psalms pertaining to Christ, the Church, and the Saints.

His second class of Psalms are the *Lehrpsalmen*, which teach us what we are to do and leave undone according to the Law of God, including those Psalms which condemn the doctrines of men and extol the Word of God.

His third group is the *Trostpsalmen*, which strengthen and comfort the distressed and afflicted saints and reproach and terrify the tyrants.

The fourth class consists of the *Betsalmen*, in which God is being invoked and in which one prays in all kinds of need. To this class also, according to Luther, all those Psalms belong which lament and mourn and cry out against the enemies.

The last class is the *Dankpsalmen*, in which one praises God and extols Him for His manifold favors and help. These Psalms of Thanksgiving Luther evaluates as the foremost, which represent the main reason why the Psalter has been written. From them the Psalter has derived its name, *Sepher Tehillim*, i.e., *ein Lobebuch*, a book of praises, *ein Dankbuch*, a book of thanksgiving.

Luther, of course, wants everyone to know that the Psalms because of their many verses cannot always be classified so readily and precisely according to one of these five classes. At times one may find two, three, or all five represented in one Psalm, in order that promises, doctrine, solace, prayer, and thanksgiving may be close to one another. Thus in his summary of Psalm 150 he says: “Apparently it is a *Dankpsalm*, yet at the same time also a *Trostpsalm*, yea, also a *Lehrpsalm*, and a *Weissagung*, since it with one accord proclaims God’s grace and teaches us to trust and believe in Him. The point in classifying the Psalms, however, is none other than to inform the reader that the Psalter deals with all five classes. This should serve the purpose of aiding the reader to understand and to adapt himself much more readily to the Psalter, also to learn and to remember it better.”<sup>10</sup>

There can be no doubt in our minds that this classification serves a very practical purpose. No student of the Psalter can approach the individual Psalms without giving thought to some kind of classification. Modern scholars of the Old Testament are more than ever aware of the need of doing this very thing. Since Gunkel has taken the initiative with his *Gattungsforschung*, which seeks to make out the different literary “types” or “categories,” this work has been carried out with ever renewed zeal. And modern commentaries like those of Elmer Leslie, *The Psalms*, and of John Paterson, *The Praises of Israel*, build on Gunkel’s *Gattungsforschung*. This is not the place to enter in upon an evaluation of this new undertaking. That much has been accomplished in giving the student a better understanding of the formal structure of Old Testament literature can not be questioned. But after all has been said and done modern scholars also can do no more than speak of Hymns and Laments as the two outstanding classes of Psalms in the Psalter. They may subsume many subdivisions under these two categories, such as Royal Psalms, Enthronement Psalms, Songs of Zion, Pilgrim Psalms. Prophetic Psalms, Wisdom Psalms a. o., yet these subdivisions cannot be regarded as independent types or classes. They have been classified according to the material criteria of content and therefore only differ from one another as to content. Added to this the names of some of these subdivisions are old. Such names as Songs of Zion, even used by Gunkel in his classification of the Psalms, Pilgrim Psalms a. o. are not new. And to classify certain Psalms as prayers, as is done by Briggs in *The International Critical Commentary* and Leslie in his recent commentary, is

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8 IV, 1393.

9 IV, 138.

10 IV, 197.

the very thing that Luther did when speaking of *Betpsalmen*, a name that is already given to the first 72 Psalms at the close of the Second Book of the Psalter (Psalm 72, 20). Finally Leslie also lists Psalms 51 and 130 as “Prayers of Penitence.” In short, mere formal criteria of classification do not and can not meet the requirements of modern commentaries, even when they borrow other formal criteria, for instance from the Temple worship, and speak of “Liturgies of Praises and Thanksgiving” or of “Congregational and Individual Hymns or Laments.” As important as all these formal criteria are for a comprehensive study of the Psalms, they cannot replace the criteria of content in the classification of the Psalter as introduced by Luther in his *Summarien*.

Luther has no formal criteria in his classification of the Psalms. He speaks of Psalms and of Psalms only. He may never have used the terms *Hymnen* and *Klagelieder*. Nevertheless, his class of *Dankpsalmen*, from which the whole Psalter has derived its name of *Sepher Tehillim*, is in essence nothing else than Hymns of Praise and of Thanksgiving, which we find in the modern classification of the Psalms. On the other hand, Luther is well aware of the fact that there are many laments in the Psalter, which he lists under the category of *Betpsalmen*, to which “all those Psalms belong which lament and mourn and cry out against the enemies.” Eduard Koenig in his commentary, *Die Psalmen* (1927), gets nearer to Luther’s classification of the Psalms than any other modern commentator. He also classifies many Psalms as *Dankpsalmen*, and others again as *Bittpsalmen* with subdivisions in which the Psalmist calls upon God for help against his enemies. Koenig has also retained the classification of the Penitential Psalms as *Die sieben Busspsalmen* (cf. pp. VII and VIII).

Literary form and structure is, however, only one side of the modern classification into “types” or *Gattungen*. The other side is the emphasis laid on the *Sitz im Leben*, “the place in life,” “the living background” of the Psalms. Concerning this background Gunkel himself has this to say: “The basic fact for the literary study of the Psalms is that these songs spring originally from worship. These Psalms must be assigned to a class whose common element is some definite divine service.”<sup>11</sup> While this certainly need not always be the case, yet Luther’s *Lehr-* and *Bet-* and *Dankpsalmen* constantly remind one of the divine service as a living background of the Psalms and also of the practicability of his classification for our day.

The same can be said of Luther’s *argumentum* or *summa*, which follows at once upon the *scopus*. It represents a short summary of the contents of each Psalm and sets forth the line of thought that the psalmist follows in each Psalm. It is surprising to observe that Briggs in *The International Critical Commentary* also follows this mode of procedure, beginning his work on each Psalm with a designation of the class to which it belongs and with a short summary of its contents. Insofar Luther’s work on the Psalms has not yet been superseded.

Singular, however, is Luther’s *Nutz eines Psalmen*, the use to which he puts each Psalm by informing the reader to which Commandments and Petitions it belongs. He does this uninterruptedly in his *Summarien* for the first thirty-one Psalms and then assures his readers that henceforth with the help of the foregoing examples they will readily know to what Commandments and Petitions the following Psalms belong. The prayers, he adds, belong to the Second Commandment and the First Petition, for they honor and call upon the name of the Lord. The doctrinal Psalms, the Psalms of Comfort, and those of Thanksgiving all belong to the Third Commandment and most likely also to the Second, and to the First and to the Third Petition. For they sanctify the real Sabbath by means of the true sacrifice and worship. Often a Psalm belongs to all three Commandments and Petitions, he adds.<sup>12</sup>

Luther now tells us why he has thus subsumed each Psalm under a Commandment or Petition. We should learn to use and to understand the Commandments of God and the Lord’s Prayer and to observe how often the esteemed saints and prophets have discussed and treated the first three Commandments and Petitions. Always anew they dealt with them and still did not teach anything new nor went beyond the Tables of Moses and the Lord’s Prayer. Thus we must learn to see how all of the Scripture and the sanctified life of the prophets proceeded from the Ten Commandments and also remain there. The prophets do not introduce any new doctrine, as the false spirits and teachers do. They war and raise the severest charges against the latter and seek

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<sup>11</sup> *The Praises of Israel* by John Paterson, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> IV, 150.

to keep the people attached to the Commandments and to the pure and unadulterated Word of God. At all times they want to prevent false doctrines and error's ways.<sup>13</sup>

Thus Luther instructs us to remain within the realm of the prophetic writings in our study of the Psalms. And last but not least his *Summarien* are not to replace the Psalms. Therefore he does not want anyone who is pleased with his modest service—and this is his closing plea—to mingle his *Summarien* with the Psalter or to insert them between the Psalms. For he prefers to see the text altogether by itself, nicely separated (*fein ungemengt*).<sup>14</sup> The reason for this singular plea is that it is not proper that his *Summarien*, a few of which are almost a commentary, to take up more room than the Psalms themselves by placing them between the text.

Our purpose in presenting our readers with a translation of some of these *Summarien* is that of creating an interest or a renewed interest in this valuable work of Luther. Those of our readers who have been reading and studying these *Summarien* in the German original, will agree with us in our evaluation of them. For whether we think of the pastor as an exegete<sup>15</sup> or as a preacher<sup>16</sup> or as a catechist,<sup>17</sup> he cannot dispense with them.

Those of our readers, however, who have not read and studied these summaries for some time in the past, perhaps because their German Luther was receding more and more into the background and a translation was not forthcoming, may take advantage of this invaluable gift of Luther to his German people, a gift which was highly treasured by them. To this the letter of Justus Menius addressed to Luther in 1533 bears eloquent testimony. He writes to Luther as follows:

“Accept my profoundest and perpetual thanks, dear father in Christ, that you have finally completed the *Summarien über den Psalter* for us. Without ceasing I pray to God, our Father, that He may also let us benefit by what He has deigned to bestow on us through you, His servant, according to His boundless goodness. In other words, may He not permit this so costly treasure to appear of little value to us, because of the large number of spiritual and truly heavenly gifts already at our disposal.”<sup>18</sup>

Menius' thanks and prayers will also be ours, if we but seek to do justice to this invaluable gift of Luther. For no other work of Luther on the Psalms teaches us as does this work to gain the right approach to the Psalter. And “the Psalter is the book for the highest and holiest theologians.”<sup>19</sup>

## Psalm 1

Psalm 1 is a Psalm of Comfort (*ein Trostpsalm*), which admonishes us to gladly hear and learn God's Word. It comforts us in that it promises much and great good to be derived from it, and that all our words and deeds are to be prosperous over against all enemies. Even as a palm tree flourishes near the waters and brings forth fruit despite all heat and frost. The doctrines of men do not bring this about. Even as the wind scatters the chaff, thus they also pass away. For God also says that He is pleased with the disciples of His Word, while He suffers those who are not His disciples to perish.

This Psalm proceeds from the Third Commandment, even belongs to it. For in it we are commanded to keep the Sabbath Day, i.e., to gladly hear and learn the Word of God. It is also included in the Lord's Prayer, in

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13 IV, 150f. Luther is here speaking of *Nebenlehren und andern neuen Beiwegen* which the editor of Vol. 38 of the *Weimarer Ausgabe* explains as meaning *Irrlehren* and *Irrwege*. Justus Jonas, according to the St. Louis Edition, translated *Nebenlehren* with *doctrinas hominum*.

14 IV, 198f.

15 We do not want to forget that Luther's introduction to his *Summarien* is entitled *Ursachen des Dolmetschens*, i.e., the why and wherefore of an interpretation, especially as applied to specific passages in the Psalter.

16 In answering the question “Which Books of the Bible One is to Preach on in the Church” Luther in his *Tischreden* (XXII, 1417) places the Psalter at the head of the list.

17 The editors of the *Summarien* in the *Weimarer Ausgabe* (Vol. 38, 1) call attention to the fact that later compilers of catechisms did not suffer Luther's thought to pass unnoticed, namely that the First and the Third Part of the Catechism, which Luther continued to peruse prayerfully, are to be tied up with the Psalter, that pertinent Psalms are to be used to explain and to interpret individual Commandments and Petitions.

18 XXIIb, 1799.

19 WA, *Tischreden*, Vol. 4, 5008.

the Second and Third Petition, where we pray for the Kingdom and for His Will, both of which come by His Word.

### **Psalm 2**

Psalm 2 is a Messianic Psalm (*eine Weissagung von Christo*), how He must suffer and thereby become a king and lord of the whole world. In this Psalm we also have threats aimed at kings and lords threatening them with destruction, if they do not serve and worship this king, but persecute and seek to exterminate Him. These are followed by promises granting salvation to those who believe in Him.

This Psalm proceeds from the First Commandment in which God pledges Himself to be our God, who will help us from all needs and will do every good thing for us. Even as He has saved us through Christ from sins, death, and hell and has brought us unto life eternal. Christ's sufferings and persecutions were followed by His glory and His kingdom, not only among the Jews but also among the Gentiles, even unto the end of the world.

Here in this Psalm the enemies of Christ are being mocked and then exhorted by the prophet to understand the truth, unless they prefer to perish and suffer miserable death in the presence of Christ, their angry judge.

This we ask for in the Lord's Prayer in the Second Petition: Thy kingdom come.

### **Psalm 3**

Psalm 3 is a prayer (*Betpsalm*) in which David is made our example as he prayed in time of need. When he was being put to flight by his son Absalom, his prayer was answered. Finally he praises God as the true helper and preserver of all those who are His own, who call upon Him in all trouble.

This Psalm belongs to the First Commandment in which God wants to be our God who succors us. It is also included in the Seventh Petition of the Lord's Prayer in which we pray to be delivered from all evil.

### **Psalm 4**

Psalm 4 is a Psalm of Comfort (*ein Trostpsalm*). The Psalmist also prays and teaches. For when we are in a bad way, he teaches us to trust in God. He also reproves the ungodly who turn to the vain gods and to material comforts without being willing to suffer affliction. And although God is the supreme comfort, still they do not want to practice patience and trust in Him.

It is true that God has recourse to wondrous ways in dealing with His saints. At first He abandons them and thereby tries their faith and patience. But the ungodly want to be sure of having their bellies filled. They mock and despise him who speaks to them of faith and patience and say to him: How should the fool be able to tell us what is good? Indeed, wait until a roast chicken flies into your mouths. Wait for it and do not roast it.

This Psalm also belongs to the First Commandment. For the psalmist teaches and admonishes to hope in God and to trust in Him with patience, whenever there is a lack of anything. Then he reproves the unbelievers and those who are impatient.

This Psalm is also included in the Third and the Seventh Petition, in which we pray that God's Will be done and that we may be delivered from evil. It may also be found in the Fourth Petition, in which we pray for our daily bread, i.e., for peace and all the necessities of this life in the face of every kind of earthly need.

### **Psalm 5**

Psalm 5 is a prayer (*Betpsalm*) against the false teachers and the factious spirits. In it the Psalmist condemns both their hypocritical doctrine and works, whereby they in the name of God do great harm to the pure Word of God and to the true worship. In the last verse God promises to answer such a prayer and to reject rebellious spirits.

This Psalm belongs to the Second and the Third Commandment in which we are commanded to sanctify God's name and Word. It also belongs to the First and the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer, in which we pray for God's name, glory, and the upbuilding of His kingdom.

### Psalm 6

Psalm 6 is a prayer (*Betpsalm*) in which the Psalmist laments the intense and secret suffering of the conscience. Although believing and hoping, still because of his sin and tormented by the Law and the wrath of God, he is either driven to despair or to a wrong belief. This is called here and there in the Psalter the snares of death, the sorrows of hell, the perils of death, and the agony of hell. But in the end he shows that such a prayer is answered. This is, indeed, a comforting example for all who are enduring such trials, showing them that they are not to remain subject to them.

He also reproves the evildoers, i.e., the false saints who usually hate and persecute such afflicted people. For they comfort themselves with their own sanctity and know nothing of such trials. Consequently they are the worst enemies of pure faith.

This Psalm belongs to the First and the Second Commandment. For it glorifies the warfare of faith in God and prays against sin and death.

It also belongs to the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer together with all other prayer-psalms. For to pray is to call upon the name of God and to honor Him.

### Psalm 7

Psalm 7 is also a prayer (*Betpsalm*) in which the Psalmist complains about slanderers, who accuse the saints, and their doctrine, of being seditious and disturbers of the government and of peace. A case in point is Simei, the Jeminite, who slandered the pious David in his plight as if he had taken over Saul's kingdom by force. The Jews also accused Christ before Pilate and the revilers of our day rail at the Gospel.

Prayerfully the Psalmist is coping with such trials and is invoking God because of his innocence. By means of his own example and for our comfort he shows how such a prayer has been answered. He then threatens the slanderers and tyrants with dire threats, referring to Absalom in order to exemplify how he perished before he had carried out the evil deed which he had in mind and which he had actually set out to perform.

This Psalm, however, also belongs to the Second Commandment and to the First Petition, as can also be said of the following Psalm.

### Psalm 8

Psalm 8 is a Messianic Psalm (*eine Weissagung von Christo*) concerning Christ's suffering, resurrection, and kingdom over all creatures. And such kingdom is to be founded by the mouth of babes, i.e., without sword and armor, solely through Word and faith.

It belongs to the First Commandment according to which God wants to be our God. It also belongs to the Second Petition, as already mentioned above in the Second Psalm.

In answering the question "Which Books of the Bible One is to Preach on in the Church," Luther in his *Tischreden*, as we already pointed out, placed the Psalter at the head of the list.<sup>1</sup> The question naturally arises how often Luther himself preached on the Psalms. The fifth volume of the St. Louis Edition answers our question in part in that it lists the following Psalms as sermon-texts: 8; 26; 65; 110; 112; 68, 19. These, of course, were not the only Psalms that Luther chose as sermon-texts throughout the many years of his preaching activity. The 22nd volume of the *Weimarer Ausgabe* lists no less than 42 sermons that Luther preached on Psalm texts. This number, however, cannot compare with the large number of sermons that Luther gleaned from

<sup>1</sup> Quartalschrift, January 1952, p. 42, Footnote 16.

the fifty chapters of Genesis. These number more than 150.<sup>2</sup> Besides Genesis, however, no other book of the Old Testament yielded as many sermon-texts to Luther as the Psalter, while Isaiah is third with a yield of 26 texts.<sup>3</sup>

In the Old Testament selections for the church year in the various territorial churches of Germany the Psalter heads the list of Old Testament books from which most of the texts have been selected. We find them indexed by Langsdorff and Neuberg in their homiletical handbook, *Alttestamentliche Perikopen*, containing *Perikopenreihen* of 15 different territorial churches. No less than 57 Psalm texts are to be found among the 185 Old Testament pericopes, almost one-third of all the texts assembled. Isaiah is second with a yield of 38 texts, while Genesis is third with but 25 texts.

Again if we take one of these 15 Old Testament *Perikopenreihen*, the *Eisenach* Old Testament Selections, we find that it contains 17 Psalm texts as compared with 8 from Isaiah, 7 from the Pentateuch, and 6 from Jeremiah. Since no less than 63 texts from 20 different books of the Old Testament go to make up this series, the Psalm texts again number almost one-third of all the texts of this series.

In the New Series of Pericopes for the Entire Church Year as adopted by the Synodical Conference we find 12 Psalm texts as compared with 9 from Genesis and 6 from Isaiah. In this series one-fifth of all the texts chosen from 20 books of the Old Testament are Psalm texts. In short, the Psalter remains at the head of the list of all Old Testament books from which pericopes have been selected by various Lutheran churches since the days of the Reformation.

Luther's *Summarien* of these Psalms should therefore be of special value to all pastors who are preaching on the pericopes of the one or the other Old Testament series. As short and precise summaries they serve the special purpose of providing the preacher with the leading thought or thoughts of the respective Psalms. In continuing our translation of Luther's *Summarien* we want to confine ourselves to the summaries of those Psalms which have been chosen as pericopes in the various Old Testament selections in use in the Lutheran Church. There are 45 Psalm texts listed for the festival cycle of the church year and 32 for the Trinity Cycle. Some of these are used for both the festival and the Trinity cycle, thus limiting the number to 57. We hope that it will best serve the purpose of our readers to continue or begin with a translation of those *Summarien* which are summaries of the Psalms of the Trinity Cycle.<sup>4</sup>

### Psalm 39

Psalm 39 is a Psalm of Comfort (*Trostpsalm*). At the same time the Psalmist also prays that God may not let him complain and become impatient at the ungodly who live so securely and heap up riches as if they would not die. The pious, moreover, are always being tormented and punished because of their sins. And yet the Psalmist desires much more that God grant him to consider how short and insecure this life is, rather than that he together with the ungodly should be so secure, and without any fear of death be given to covetousness and boasting.

<sup>2</sup> According to the index of volume 9 of the *Weimarer Ausgabe* Luther preached 45 times on 24 different chapters of Genesis from 1519 to 1521. In the years 1523 and 1524 according to the index of volume 14 Luther delivered 62 sermons on the 50 chapters of Genesis. In the year 1527 Luther again preached on all 50 chapters of Genesis (cf. Vol. 24).

<sup>3</sup> In Professor Kiesslings' dissertation on the Early Sermons of Luther and Their Relation to The Pre-Reformation Sermon we read: "Of the Old Testament texts, the five books of Moses, the Psalter, and Isaiah yield the greatest number. In fact, there are only six texts from all the other books of the Old Testament combined: two from Jeremiah, and one each from Judges, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Malachi. Only four are taken from the Apocrypha and those are all from the book of Jesus ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)."

<sup>4</sup> The Psalm texts of the Trinity Cycle are the following: 39 and 78, 1-7 (first Sunday after Trinity); 112, 5-7 (fourth and fourteenth Sunday after Trinity); 34, 12-23 (fifth and seventh Sunday after Trinity); 1 (sixth, eighth, eleventh, fourteenth, and seventeenth Sunday after Trinity); 85, 8-14 (seventh and twenty-third Sunday after Trinity); 32 (eleventh and nineteenth Sunday after Trinity); 50, 14-23 and 92 (fourteenth Sunday after Trinity); 37, 4-6 (sixteenth Sunday after Trinity); 75, 5-8 (seventeenth Sunday after Trinity); 130 (seventeenth Sunday after Trinity); 42, 2-6 (eighteenth Sunday after Trinity); 121 (twentieth Sunday after Trinity); 125 (twenty-first Sunday after Trinity); 127 (twenty-second Sunday after Trinity); 123 (twenty-third Sunday after Trinity); 39, 5-14 (twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity); 39, 5-8 (twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity); 126 (twenty-third, twenty-fourth, twenty-fifth, and twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity); 103 (twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity).

For it is a great offense and agitates many hearts that the wicked live riotously and securely, while the pious must needs be afflicted and distressed. But in the end it becomes apparent that the very best thing is to have the forgiveness of sins and a gracious God, who helps us in all need, as the Psalmist says and prays. — First Sunday after Trinity (also twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity).

### Psalm 78

Psalm 78 is a doctrinal Psalm (*Lehrpsalm*), in which the Psalmist teaches us to trust and believe in God. He does this by means of examples and narratives pertaining to all of Israel from its beginning to the time of David. Then he warns us against lack of trust and belief and points to the punishment which has been inflicted on those who failed to put their trust in Him, and to the grace which those experienced who trusted in Him. — First Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 112

Psalm 112 is a Psalm of Comfort (*Trostpsalm*), in which the God-fearing and pious leading a good life are being praised and in which everlasting comfort against all evil is being promised. Especially does it praise their heartfelt confidence and trust in God's grace, in consequence of which they are undismayed and without fear (which is the real true faith), till they see the ungodly and all their enemies perish. — Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 34

Psalm 34 is also a Psalm of Thanksgiving (*Dankpsalm*), almost the same as the foregoing one. According to the title and the sixth verse it refers to the history of David as a fitting example for all the righteous that they should learn from it how God does not despise the supplications of His saints. In conjunction herewith it also teaches how we should fear God and no one else. Then we are also to be on guard against false doctrine, of cursing, murmuring, and blaspheming. Moreover, we are to have patience and to bless the enemies rather than to curse them. We are also to wish them every good thing and to requite them with it for their evil. Thus we are to live in peace with all people (as far as we are able) whether they are bad or pious. For it has been decreed, as the Psalmist tells us, that many are the afflictions of the righteous. There is nothing to be done about it. If you want to be righteous, then prepare to bear the cross and to suffer. It simply must be.

Again it is decreed, the Psalmist tells us, that the Lord will deliver us from all sufferings so faithfully that not one small bone is lost or is wanting. Yes, even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. For although bones of the saints have often been broken when suffering the martyr's death, while some have also been burned to ashes and many are also moldering in the graves, still they shall return and not remain broken eternally or considered broken. For a time they are broken and thereafter all of them again become whole and more gainly than ever before.

Note well that this is the first Psalm which speaks of the angels, how they take care of the righteous and serve them, how they are not simply with and near us, but how they encamp, as the Psalmist says, round about us as an army and as armed warriors. He also tells us how they pitch their tents, watch and war for us against the devil and all his host. What a great and glorious comfort it is for all who believe it, as the Prophet Elisha later on verifies and illustrates this verse with his experience in 2 Kings 6. This verse, however, is taken from the 32nd chapter of Genesis, where the angels meet the patriarch Jacob who then calls the place "host" or "camp." For they were his escort and encamped round about him, as our Psalm tells us. — Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 1

Psalm 1 is a Psalm of Comfort (*Trostpsalm*), which admonishes us to gladly hear and learn God's Word. It comforts us in that it promises much and great good to be derived from it, and that all our words and deeds are to be prosperous over against all enemies. Even as a palm tree flourishes near the waters and brings forth fruit



despite all heat and frost. The doctrines of men do not bring this about. Even as the wind scatters the chaff, thus they also pass away. For God also says that He is pleased with the disciples of His Word, while He suffers those who are not His disciples to perish.

This Psalm proceeds from the Third Commandment, even belongs to it. For in it we are commanded to keep the Sabbath Day, i.e., to gladly hear and learn the Word of God. It is also included in the Lord's Prayer, in the Second and Third Petition, where we pray for the Kingdom and for His Will, both of which come by His Word. —Sixth Sunday after Trinity (also eighth, eleventh, and seventeenth Sunday after Trinity).

### Psalm 85

Psalm 85 is a Prayer (*Betpsalm*), in which he asks for pardon from God's wrath and seeks grace. The reason for this wrath was a lack of God's Word and of faithful pastors, also of good government, peace, and pious magistrates. Finally there was a scarcity of fruitfulness and prosperity. For such plagues have a habit of cleaving together. Therefore he prays that God would let His voice be heard again, so that his own people might not again fall for some folly, curse because of impatience, or seek other gods. He also prays for an increase of peace among the people, unity, truth, love, and fruitfulness of the land, that they may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, as St. Paul also teaches to pray 1 Timothy 2. —Seventh Sunday after Trinity (also twenty-third Sunday after Trinity).

### Psalm 32

Psalm 32 is an exemplary doctrinal Psalm (*Lehrpsalm*), which teaches us what sin is, how one gets rid of it, and how one may be righteous before God. For our reason does not know what sin is and thinks it is making amends for it with its good works. But here the Psalmist says that all saints are also sinners, who cannot be holy and blessed in any other way than that they know themselves as sinners before God and realize that they are deemed just by God without any worthiness or work on their part by grace alone. To sum it up: Our righteousness is called in German *Vergebung unserer Sünde*, forgiveness of our sins, or as he says in this Psalm: Not imputing sin, covering sin, not wanting to see sin.

There we have the clear and plain words that all saints are sinners, live and continue as sinners. But they are holy because God in His grace does not want to have such sin seen or imputed, but rather forgotten, forgiven, and covered up. As a result there is no difference between saints and sinners. They are all sinners in like manner and all sin daily. Only that the sin of the saints is not imputed but is covered up. The sin of the sinners is imputed and is exposed. The wounds of the former have been dressed and are bandaged. But the wounds of the latter are open and not bandaged. Yet in both instances they are real wounds, real sinners. Concerning all this we have testified in other parts of our writings. —Eleventh Sunday after Trinity (also nineteenth Sunday after Trinity).

### Psalm 50

Psalm 50 is a doctrinal Psalm (*Lehrpsalm*). It explains what true worship and sacrifices are in contrast to those of the spurious saints. These regard their sacrifices and merits so highly as if God had to be grateful and indebted to them. God really reverses matters and wants His benefits and help cherished so highly that one really should be grateful and indebted to Him. And mark well that this Psalm with clear words deduces and teaches that to call on God in need and to thank Him is the true worship, the most precious sacrifice, and the true way to everlasting salvation, as the last verse chants. In short, the fact that verse 14 speaks of praying vows does not imply frantic self-chosen vows, but those that are commanded in the Ten Commandments, especially in the First and the Second. In these two commandments we promise our God that we want to believe in Him, call upon Him, praise and thank Him as our one and only God, etc. Nothing of this is known to the mad saints and the perfidious hypocrites. —Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 92

Psalm 92 is a Psalm of Comfort (*Trostpsalm*), which extols God's Word exceedingly. It tells us what a noble, precious gift it is in contrast to the spurious saints who question it. They may flourish for a time, even be invested with honor and power. Finally, however, they perish. The just shall endure forever. Even if they reach a ripe old age they really never grow old, but daily grow young again by means of the Word of God, which flourishes eternally and bears fruit. The fools, however, do not understand and esteem this, even as it also happens in our own day. —Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 37

Psalm 37 is a Psalm of Comfort (*Trostpsalm*). It teaches and admonishes us to have patience in this world and especially warns us against envy. For it is particularly annoying and hurts those who are of a weak faith, when the ungodly prosper and those that fear God experience the very opposite. It is a great spiritual virtue not to curse and to wish this and that in one's heart when seeing the peasant, burgher, nobility, princes, and everyone else who is proficient practicing such great insolence. Besides all that one must still suffer tribulation and see that they prosper in everything, remain unpunished, yea that they are even being praised and honored. Added to this the God-fearing are also being despised by them, hated, envied, hindered, plagued, and persecuted most unmercifully. In other words, learn to have patience under such circumstances and let your heart remain true to God. Do not let it annoy you. Do not let envy move you to curse, to wish evil, to grumble, and to look askance. Endure it; commend it to God. He will surely find them out.

This is what this Psalm teaches and comforts one in every possible manner with rich promises, with examples, with admonition. For it is a very great art to show such patience, since our reason and all the heathen look upon such envy as a virtue. For it seems as if it were proper to envy and to begrudge the ungodly because of their insolence, good luck, and their riches. —Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 75

Psalm 75 is a Psalm of Comfort (*Trostpsalm*), opposing the stiff-necked, proud, ungodly teachers. These are so secure and take such pride in their office that they do not fear nor take notice of anything, whether it be threatenings or punishments, as we also find it to be the case in Psalm 12. Who should teach us? We are the teachers. We are in office. We have power. We are to be obeyed, otherwise you must be banned or be a heretic.

Even now our self-confident Junkers, both the ecclesiastical and the secular tyrants, also the enthusiasts, are sitting so pretty that they think even God Himself cannot depose nor overthrow them. But this Psalm reads differently and comforts us in that it tells us to wait for judgment. Then He wants to judge and exercise justice in such a manner that the earth shall be moved and tremble together with those who dwell in it. Yet He wants to preserve the pillars, i.e., the pious, who carry and keep the earth from falling, as St. Paul calls the church a pillar and ground for the truth. Even as He kept Lot, when He let Sodom go to ruins, and the believing Jews together with the Apostles, when He exterminated the Jewish people. For He knows to keep His own full well when He destroys a country. —Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 130

Psalm 130 is a Prayer (*Betpsalm*), which is characteristic of real Davidic devotion and understanding. For he confesses that no one in the sight of God is or can be just by means of his own works and righteousness. One is this only through grace and the forgiveness of sins, which has been promised by God. On such a promise and word he relies and comforts himself, and admonishes all Israel that it should do likewise and learn that with God is the mercy seat and salvation. Israel is also to learn that it had to be redeemed from all sins through Him alone and through no one else, i.e., it had to become just and be saved by means of the forgiveness of sins (else it would not be grace). If this were not the case it would remain in the depths of hell and not stand before God.

Behold, the Psalmist is a real master and doctor of the Holy Scriptures. He has understood what it means: The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent, Gen. 3, and: In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed, Genesis in the twelfth and twenty-second chapter. Therefore both these foregoing

promises and prophecies of Christ are in this verse: He will save Israel from all its sins. The whole Psalm is based on this verse and proceeds from it. —Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 42

Psalm 42 is a prayer (*Betpsalm*) in which the Psalmist complains about heartfelt sadness, as if God were angry at him and tormenting him. Added to this, he needs must also be mocked by the ungodly: Where is thy God? For the ungodly, when they see that the pious are in a bad way, cannot refrain from jeering, laughing, and mocking. Ah, how he is receiving his dues! Thus heretics must fare, they say. They mean nothing else but that being tormented is definitely a sign of divine wrath. But when they are being tormented, then it can have no other meaning but that they are suffering for God's sake and are turning into sainted martyrs. The perverse, blind, and noxious leaders of the blind don't want to know that God chastises His own, yet again also comforts them and forsakes them not.

The Psalmist, however, desires to go to the house of the Lord and to derive comfort from God's countenance. In other words, he would like to hear God's Word, which comforts him. For the house of God is the place where God's Word dwells. And His countenance is His presence, where He makes Himself known and reveals His grace by means of His Word. Elsewhere in the Scriptures it is called not turning His back but His countenance toward us. —Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 121

Psalm 121 is a Psalm of Comfort (*Trostpsalm*) in which the Psalmist comforts by setting an example that one should remain steadfast in faith and should expect God's help and protection. For though it does seem as if He were sleeping or snoring, so that both the sun by day and the moon by night smite us, still it is not as we feel and imagine it to be. For He watches over us and keeps us safe and does not suffer the sun to smite us, so that we are doomed to die. We'll certainly experience this in the long run, if we only know how to wait patiently for it. —Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 125

Psalm 125 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving (*Dankpsalm*). In it the Psalmist gives thanks because God does not continuously suffer the ungodly teachers and rulers to exercise dominion over those who truly believe, teach, and hope in Him, lest they also finally grow too weary and even fall away from the Word to the ungodly. To them, moreover, who trust in Him, He will give every good thing. The apostates, however, both teachers and pupils, pursuing their crooked ways, He will thrust out and disperse. We also have experienced this very thing and see it happen in our day, for instance in the case of the factious spirits. —Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 127

Psalm 127 is a doctrinal Psalm (*Lehrpsalm*). As such it teaches that both governmental and domestic rule are gifts of God and are in God's keeping. For when He does not grant peace and a good government, no wisdom, regulation, struggle, nor preparedness aid us in keeping peace. Where He does not prosper us with wife, child, and servants, there all worrying and labor are in vain. More of this in our commentary,<sup>5</sup> in which He has been clearly portrayed. —Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 123

Psalm 123 is a Prayer (*Betpsalm*), aimed at the proud and the haughty who despise and deride God's Word and His people. The heathen are not the only ones who do this, who regard the God and the worship of the children of Israel as tomfoolery, even as an error and a revolt. No, they themselves in their own midst, the ungodly, the

<sup>5</sup> Luther according to the *Weimarer Ausgabe* is here referring to the interpretation of Psalm 127 that accompanied his letter addressed to the Christians in Riga in Latvia 1524.

idolaters, and the false teachers with their whole following, in a proud and cock-sure manner despised and derided the little band of believers and the true doctrine, even as the twelfth and fourteenth Psalm also carry such a complaint.

Now our Junkers and factious spirits, both of whom are more saintly than the Gospel itself, deride and down the poor preachers and true servants of Christ in a manner which is characteristic of both. This does not include what our own heathen, the ecclesiastical lords and their following, are doing. Consequently we must be exposed in all places to every kind of contempt. But God is and will be gracious toward us. Amen. —Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.

### Psalm 126

Psalm 126 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving (*Dankpsalm*) for the liberation from the Babylonian Captivity. Whether it has been written after or before (as a prophecy of comfort and hope for the future liberation that they might not despair) matters little. At the close he concludes that things as regards the saints happen and must happen in such a manner that they suffer tribulation unto the end before they can be happy, even as the world must first experience joy to the full before it suffers pain. Therefore the saints must sow with tears, thereafter reap with joy. But seed that bears such fruit is excellent and precious, as the Psalmist says. Because of one's tears, however, one cannot see that it is thus precious and worthy in the sight of God, who loves this seed so much. Even the death of His saints is more precious in the sight of the Lord than all the treasures and goods of the world, although death for the world is the most abominable and accursed seed. —Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity (also twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity).

### Psalm 103

Psalm 103 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving (*Dankpsalm*), written in an elegant and charming style. In it the Psalmist thanks God for all benefits, as for instance forgiveness of sins, restoring both body and soul to health, giving a sufficient supply of all kinds of goods, making one happy and content, and delivering from enemies and distress. In short, it is He who continues to be a gracious, merciful, loving Father toward us who are frail and useless handiworks and creatures. He does not deal with us according to our sins and deserts, but according to His grace and loving-kindness, insofar as we also have a knowledge of ourselves and keep His covenant, i.e., believe in Him, seek to grow godly and not to be proud and stiff-necked in our holiness and righteousness, which runs altogether contrary to the covenant, especially in the First Commandment.

All of this comes to pass in Christ, who was promised at the time and now is come, whose kingdom rules over all, etc. For at the close of the Psalm, when he exhorts the angels that excel in strength, the ministers and hosts who proclaim His Word, to bless, he refers and applies the Psalm to Christ, His Apostles, Gospel, and Church, wherein such grace rules. For everything that we are in need of for our salvation must come to pass in and not outside of Christ. —Twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity.

Before we begin with a translation of Luther's summaries of those Psalms that are assigned to the "primary festival" of the church-year, we find it more timely and expedient to publish in this issue a translation of the summaries of those Psalms that belong to the "fixed festivals" of the church-year including a number of mission-festival Psalms. Langsdorff and Neuberger in their homiletical handbook, *Alttestamentliche Perikopen*, list eight Psalms for *Besondere Festtage*, belonging to the fixed festivals of the church year: Purification of Mary, February 2, Psalm 103, 1–13; Annunciation of Mary, March 25, Psalm 2; Michaelmas, September 29, Psalm 103, 1–13; 34, 1–22; 91; Reformation Festival, October 31, Psalm 46; Harvest Home Festival, the *Erntefest* or *Erntedankfest* celebrated in the Lutheran churches of Germany on the Sunday after Michaelmas (Sept. 29), Psalm 145, 15–21; Church Dedication Festival, Psalm 84; *Busstag*, November 21, Psalm 130. To two fixed festivals of the church year, Innocent's Day, December 28, and Visitation of Mary, July 2, no Psalms are assigned in our homiletical handbook. Only two of these nine festivals are still generally celebrated in the Lutheran churches of our country: Reformation Festival and Church Dedication Festival. The *Erntedankfest* was

still celebrated in the early decades of the history of our Lutheran churches, but now has generally been replaced by Thanksgiving Day. *Busstag*, a day of repentance, which is regularly celebrated in German Lutheran churches, has never found a place in the church-calendar of our Lutheran churches here in America. Still less can this be said of the *Totenfest*, which was regularly celebrated in the Ancient Church and likewise by the German Lutheran churches on the last Sunday of the church year. It corresponds to our Memorial or Decoration Day.

The eight Psalms listed above are also assigned by our homiletical handbook to various Sundays of the church year. Luther's summaries of four of them (Pss. 2, 34, 103, and 130) have already appeared in translation in the two former issues of this periodical. A translation of Luther's summaries of the four remaining Psalms of this group follow herewith together with a translation of the summaries of six Psalms selected among others by the territorial churches of Germany for their mission-festivals.<sup>6</sup>

### Psalm 91

Psalm 91 is a Psalm of Comfort (*Trostpsalm*). It incites us to trust in God in all need and trials and is replete with rich and comforting promises proceeding from and drawn out of the First Commandment. It is the second Psalm<sup>7</sup> in which the good angels are being proclaimed to be our patrons and protectors, which is very comforting and worthy of note. Above<sup>8</sup> I have expressed my opinion concerning the four trials (*Anfechtungen*) mentioned in the fifth and sixth verse of this Psalm. —Michaelmas (also second Sunday after Trinity).<sup>9</sup>

### Psalm 46

Psalm 46 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving (*Dankpsalm*). At the time, it was sung by the people of Israel because of the wonderful works of God that He protects and preserves the city of Jerusalem, His dwelling place, from the ragings and threatenings of all kings and Gentiles and preserves peace in the face of all wars and weapons. According to Scripture parlance he calls the strength of the city a river, a brook, which shall not dry up despite the mighty waters, seas, and ocean of the Gentiles, namely their great kingdoms, principalities, and dominions, which must dry up and disappear.

We, however, sing this Psalm<sup>10</sup> in praise of God because He is with us and miraculously preserves His Word and Christendom over against the gates of hell, the raging of all devils, of the rabid spirits, the world, the flesh, sins, and death etc. We also sing it in praise of God because our river remains a fountain of living water, while their swamps, pools, and puddles become putrid and fetid and dry up. —Reformation Festival (also twentieth Sunday after Trinity and sixth Sunday after Christmas).

### Psalm 145

Psalm 145 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving (*Dankpsalm*) thanking God for the future kingdom of Christ. It lays strong emphasis on the great work of praising God and of glorifying His power and kingdom. For Christ's kingdom and power are hidden under the Cross. If it were not mentioned with praise in sermons, doctrines, and confessions, who could give thought to it, let alone know anything about it. But His might and kingdom are such that He succors the fallen, takes care of the distressed, sanctifies the sinners, and quickens the dead. Yea, it

<sup>6</sup> The Psalms designated by Langsdorff and Neuberg as missions-festival Psalms are the following: Psalms 98, 2–3; 100, 1–5; 110, 2; 117. Those under the heading *Fest der inneren Mission* or Home Missions are Psalms 12, 2–6; 51, 12–14; 53; 75; 85, 7–13. A translation of Luther's summaries of the last two Psalms, 75 and 85, have appeared in the April issue, summaries of the remaining Psalms, with the exception of Psalm 51, are appearing in this issue. All of these Psalms are also assigned to different Sundays or festivals of the church-year.

<sup>7</sup> The first Psalm to which Luther referred as speaking of the angels was Psalm 34 (cf. the April issue of the *Quartalschrift*, p. 109).

<sup>8</sup> In his introduction to his *Summarien*, St. L. Ed., Vol. IV, 1132f.

<sup>9</sup> We failed to list in a footnote on page 107 of our previous issue this Psalm and the following two Psalms, 46 and 53, among the Trinity Sunday Psalms. Psalm 46 was used for the 20. Sunday after Trinity and Psalm 84 for the 11. Sunday after Trinity.

<sup>10</sup> The editor of Vol. 38 of the Weimar Edition, which contains Luther's *Summarien*, calls attention to the probability that with the above words, "We sing this Psalm," Luther is referring to his hymn, A Mighty Fortress is Our God.

is He who preserves everything, who hears the cry of His saints and satisfies their desire, protects them etc.—Harvest Home Festival (also fifth Sunday after Epiphany).

### **Psalm 84**

The Eighty-fourth Psalm is a Psalm of Comfort (*Trostpsalm*) which gloriously extols the Word of God above all things and encourages us willingly to forego all goods, honor, power, joy and happiness in order to retain God's Word. Even if we were to be but doorkeepers, i.e. the least in the house of God, it would be better than to dwell in all the palaces of the ungodly. And a day in the house of God is better than thousand happy days in the world. For the Word of God, says he, grants victory, blessing, grace, honor, and every good thing. O blessed are they who believe and practice it. Yet, where are they? If one were to curse and scorn, we would find the whole world filled with ready followers. —Church Dedication Festival (also eleventh Sunday after Trinity).

### **Psalm 117**

Psalm 117 is a Messianic Psalm. As such it prophesies that the whole world is to praise and serve Christ in His kingdom, in which grace and truth, i.e. forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and all joy and comfort are to rule over sin, death, Satan, and all evil. It has been amply interpreted by us in our Commentary.<sup>11</sup> —Mission Festival (also Exaudi).<sup>12</sup>

### **Psalm 98**

Psalm 98, as also the following one, is a prophecy of Christ's kingdom which is to be spread out over all the world. It also wants us to be happy and to praise God for His salvation, i.e. preach and return thanks for the salvation given to us through Christ. In this Psalm the worship is also not sacrificing at Jerusalem but preaching and giving thanks that He is the king of righteousness in all the world, i.e. that He Himself redeems us from sin and death without any worthiness on our part, etc. —Mission Festival (also Cantate and Sunday after Christmas).

### **Psalm 100**

Psalm 100 is a Messianic Promise. It encourages all the world to be happy, to praise and to give thanks, i.e. to serve God and to enter into His gates and courts, to call upon Him with all confidence. For His grace is an eternal kingdom, which truly remains forever and ever. —Mission Festival (also first Sunday in Advent and third Christmas Day).

### **Psalm 110**

Psalm 110 is a Messianic Promise telling us how Christ is to be an eternal king and priest and how He is to be glorified and acknowledged as true God sitting at the right hand of God. This Psalm has no equal in all the Scriptures and is reasonably considered the principal Psalm for the confirmation of our faith. For nowhere is Christ prophesied with such clear and plain words as in this Psalm a priest and an eternal priest. As a result the Aaronic priesthood is abrogated. In the Epistle to the Hebrews this Psalm is interpreted more extensively and more gloriously. Therefore it was deplorable if such a Psalm would not be amply and intensely stressed among Christians. —Mission Festival (also Ascension).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This Commentary appeared in autumn of 1530. Cf. St. L. Ed., Vol. V, 1133ff.

<sup>12</sup> There can be no question in our minds that this Psalm with its introductory words, "O praise the Lord all ye nations," is a very fitting mission-festival text. It is the one Psalm to which Langsdorff and Neuberg in their homiletical treatise of the Psalms give the title *Missionstext* and then add that in its two verses it contains *die ganze Missionsgeschichte*, the whole history of missions.

<sup>13</sup> Since Psalm 110 is the one and only Psalm that is listed in our homiletical handbook as the text for Ascension Day, we hesitated to publish a translation of Luther's summary of this Psalm in this issue. Yet the fact that the Lutheran churches in the land of the Reformation found a verse in this Psalm, namely verse 2, which appealed to them as a mission-festival text and the fact that Luther

## Psalm 12

Psalm 12 is a Prayer (Betpsalm). It complains of false teachers who are always inventing new subtleties and who everywhere encumber the Kingdom of God with such modes of worship. The lament of the last verse especially brings this home to us. For wherever the doctrines of men begin to take root, there is no cessation, no end of them, no limit. More and more false doctrines are devised and the false teachers burden the poor consciences without measure, so that few real saints survive.

On the other hand he consoles us that God wills to revive His salvation, i.e. His Word, which boldly attacks such worthless works of man-made doctrines and frees the imprisoned consciences, although this does not take place without cross and torment. For as silver is refined in the fire, thus they must endure and thus become more and more refined and cognizant of the truth.

This Psalm belongs to the Second and Third Commandment and to the First and Second Petition. — Mission Festival (also fourth Sunday after Trinity).

## Psalm 53

Psalm 53 is a doctrinal Psalm (*Lehrpsalm*) and a Messianic prophecy. The same can be said of the Fourteenth Psalm. For both have almost the same number of verses and the same words. To summarize, both of them reprove those persons who without faith trust in good works and who persecute pure doctrine and true teachers. At the dose he proclaims the Gospel and the Kingdom of Christ, which is to come out of Zion. — Mission Festival (also second Sunday after Epiphany, second Advent Sunday, seventh Sunday after Christmas).

The following *Summarien* are the summaries of the “primary festival” Psalms. The Psalms assigned to the “primary festivals” by Langsdorff and Neuberg in their homiletical handbook are forty-two in number. There are only three festivals to which a Psalm is not assigned. These three festivals are: Fourth Sunday in Advent, Christmas Day, and Palm Sunday. For Palm Sunday the Synodical Conference in its New Series of Pericopes for the Entire Church Year has adopted Psalm 8, while the territorial churches of Germany selected Zechariah 9, 8–12. It is interesting to know that Wilhelm Vischer in his *Psalmen ausgelegt für die Gemeinde* adopts Psalm 8 for Christmas Day. He says of this Psalm: *Dass das ein Nachtlid ist, hören wir wold alle. Aber ist es auch ein Weihnachtslied? Es wird alles darauf ankommen für unser ganzes Leben, ob wir dieses Lied als ein Weihnachtslied lesen und singen können, oder ob wir es uns aneignen ohne Weihnaeht.* Vischer continues to point out that this Psalm must be read in the light of the Christmas message which makes known to us the gift of God to the world and concludes: *Der Eine wird uns geschenkt, damit es nicht nur für ihn allein wahr sei: “Wie herrlich ist der Mensch!” Sondern er schämt sich nicht, uns seine Brüder zu heissen. Er schenkt uns seine Hoheit. Wir dürfen mit ihm wirklich ganz, so wie wir sind, Gottes Kinder sein, in der Freiheit und Ueberlegenheit.* In other words, the minister has a choice of at least one Psalm for every festival day, even if he uses Psalm 8 both for Christmas Day and Palm Sunday. For the Fourth Sunday in Advent one of the six Psalms otherwise adopted for the first three Advent Sundays, among which we also find Psalm 8, can be used.

For many of the festivals more than one Psalm has been chosen. Thus three Psalms are assigned to the first Advent Sunday (24, 100, 118), to the second Sunday after Epiphany (8, 53, 139), to Maundy Thursday (23, 103, 111), to the second and third Easter Day (16, 118, 126), to *Jubilate* (23, 66, 98), and to *Rogate* (50, 104, 116). Four Psalms have been selected for the Sunday after New Year (73, 90, 103, 146), for the first Sunday after Epiphany (1, 8, 122, 139), for *Judica* (2, 22, 43, 116), as also for the Sunday after Ascension Day, *Exaudi* (27, 42, 117, 122). Five Psalms have been chosen for the fourth Sunday after Epiphany (12, 32, 46, 93, 139) and six for the New Year (39, 90, 102, 111, 119, 121). For the remaining festivals either one or two Psalms have been adopted.

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appeals to us to stress this Psalm amply and intensely among our Christians, has induced us to present our readers with a translation of Luther’s summary at this time and place.

The following Psalms are those selected for the “primary festivals” in their order from the first Advent Sunday to Pentecost Sunday:

First Sunday in Advent: Psalms 24, 3–10; 100, 1–5; 118, 22–26.

Second Sunday in Advent: Psalm 53.

Third Sunday in Advent: Psalms 8, 1–9; 146.

Fourth Sunday in Advent:...

First Christmas Day:...

Second and Third Christmas Day: Psalms 2; 100.

Sunday after Christmas: Psalms 98 and 103, 1–18.

New Year: Psalms 39; 90; 102; 119; 121.

Sunday after New Year: 73; 90; 103; 146.

Epiphany: Psalm 2.

First Sunday after Epiphany: Psalms 1; 8; 122; 139, 1–12.

Second Sunday after Epiphany: Psalms 8, 1–9; 53; 139, 1–24.

Third Sunday after Epiphany: Psalm 19.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany: Psalms 12, 2–6; 32; 46; 93; 103.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany: Psalms 42; 53; 139; 145.

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany: Psalm 50.

Septuagesima: Psalm 19, 1–7.

Sexagesima: Psalms 19, 7–14; 119, 89–105.

Estomihi: Psalms 62, 2–8; 77, 8–16.

Invocavit: Psalm 42, 1–6.

Reminiscere: Psalms 39 and 130.

Oculi: Psalm 77, 8–14.

Laetare: Psalms 23 and 40, 6–10.

Judica: Psalms 2; 22, 1–10; 43; 116.

Palm Sunday: .....

Maundy Thursday: Psalms 23; 103, 1–13; 111.

Good Friday: Psalms 22 and 111.

Easter Sunday: Psalm 118, 14–29.

Second and Third Easter Day: Psalms 16, 8–11; 118; 126.

Quasimodogeniti: Psalm 126.

Misericordias Domini: Psalms 23 and 127.

Jubilate: Psalms 23; 66; 98.

Cantate: Psalms 40, 2–12; 42, 1–6; 73, 23–26; 92; 98; 104, 24–35; 126.

Rogate: Psalms 50, 14–15; 104; 116.

Ascension: Psalm 110.

Exaudi: Psalms 27; 42; 117; 122.

Pentecost: Psalm 51, 12–14.

Since a translation of Luther’s summaries of 19 of these Psalms have already appeared in the preceding numbers of our quarterly, we shall omit them in this and the following issues.<sup>14</sup>

## Psalm 24

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<sup>14</sup> The *Summarien* of these 19 Psalms appeared in the January, April, and July issues of the *Quartalschrift* in the following Order: 1, 2, 8 (January, 1952); 39, 32, 50, 92, 130, 42, 121, 127, 126 (April, 1952); 145, 117, 98, 100, 110, 12, 53 (July, 1952). [All the psalms listed in this footnote are present in this version of the essay – this footnote retained to maintain the integrity of its original presentation in the *Quartalschrift* – WLS Library Staff]



Psalm 24 is a prophecy of the future Kingdom of Christ, which is to be in all the world. In this Psalm the gates of this world, i.e. the kings and princes are being admonished to submit to the Kingdom of Christ. For they are the ones who most of all rage against it according to Psalm 2 and say: Who is this king of glory? As if they were saying: The beggar, yea the heretic, the malefactor, is he supposed to be a king and are we supposed to submit to him and to obey him? We'll not do it, etc. Thus the Psalmist also makes known that the Word of God must experience condemnation and persecution.

This Psalm belongs to the First Commandment, really to all three Commandments and Petitions. —First Sunday in Advent.

### **Psalm 146**

The Hundred-forty-sixth Psalm is a Psalm of Thanksgiving. At the same time it also teaches that one should trust in God and not in princes or men, as the evil world, the flesh and blood are accustomed to do. For God alone can truly help in all kinds of need, and helps in such a manner that it is real help. The help of men is uncertain and does not last. Man himself is not certain of his life for one hour. —Third Sunday in Advent.

### **Psalm 90**

Psalm 90 is a doctrinal psalm, in which Moses teaches that death has its origin in sins which are known to God alone, hidden from all the world, and still since Adam inborn in all of us. He also shows how short and miserable life is here on earth, which may be called daily dying.

Yet, the Psalmist adds, it is also a good thing to be admonished by our daily dying to seek God's grace and help, who redeems us from all of it. For they who do not think of death and who feel no misery, remain mad fools, do not at all seek God's grace and help.

He closes the Psalm with the plea that God show us His work, i.e. help from sin and death, i.e. that He send Christ. And as long as we live here, he prays that God may prosper our work, i.e. that He may graciously establish and preserve both spiritual and temporal governments.

A short, fine, rich, and complete prayer. —New Year.

### **Psalm 102**

Psalm 102 is a Prayer. In it the dear venerable fathers of the Law, grown tired of sins and dying, so heartily long and call for the Kingdom of Grace promised in Christ. They pray earnestly that He would build Zion and prepare stones and mortar, so that it may prosper, and He would let His honor be seen in all kingdoms and His salvation from sin and death for all prisoners. Therefore they come together and thank Him, i.e. they would like to serve Him in the true Zion, and have the Old Testament cease. For apart from Christ there is indeed nothing but weakening of strength in the way and the shortening of days. It is a miserable, short, and pitiful life in which the Psalmist would not like to be taken away. But in God's Kingdom there is eternal life and days without end. For it is He who has been prior to heaven and earth, which He has made and which He will also change again and renew. Therefore He is outside of and above all time and His years have no end. In this Kingdom there is no dying. This Kingdom, he says, we would like to have. This Thy Kingdom come. Amen. —New Year.

### **Psalm 111**

Psalm 111 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving. It was written for the people of Israel to be sung during the Easter-festival with its Easter-lamb. In this Psalm they learned to praise God and to thank Him in a short, fine hymn for all His wonderful works, especially for the spiritual reign, priesthood, Easter festival, Law, Word of God, peace, justice in the land, help, and every kind of grace, etc. As we have interpreted it at a greater length in our Commentary.<sup>15</sup> —New Year.

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<sup>15</sup> This Commentary appeared in the autumn of 1530. St. L. Ed. V, 1057ff.

### Psalm 119

Psalm 119 is a long Psalm. In it there is much praying, comforting, teaching, and giving of thanks. But above all the Psalm has been written to draw us to the Word of God. The Psalmist praises it again and again and warns us against false doctrine, and also against disgust and disdain, etc. Therefore this Psalm is mainly to be reckoned among the Psalms of Comfort. For indeed it is truly most important that one has the pure Word and gladly hears it. From this there follows to pray well and powerfully, to teach, to comfort, to give thanks, to serve God, to suffer, and to do everything which is well pleasing to God and which vexes the devil. When one despises the Word and becomes disgusted with it, all such things are left undone. And when the Word is not taught in all its purity, then there is much, but totally false and vain praying, teaching, comforting, giving of thanks, serving God, suffering, prophesying. For all of this is nothing else but serving Satan. —New Year.

### Psalm 73

Psalm 73 is a doctrinal Psalm to combat the great offense that the ungodly are rich and well-to-do, that they nevertheless despise the poor and mournful saints, as if God did not know and esteem them. At the same time the ungodly and their holy work, what they teach and say, is supposed to be a precious thing and altogether heavenly, divine wisdom, and holiness. That hurts. And I needs must be a fool in Thy sight, the Psalmist says, i.e. I must be called an ungodly heretic and one who despises God. But do not falter, he says, hold out, he says, go into the sanctuary, hear the Word of God, what He says of them. Look at the old examples in sacred history and you will find that the ungodly suddenly are no more. For there is no rock and firm ground there, but only slippery places. —First Sunday after New Year.

### Psalm 122

Psalm 122 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving. In it the Psalmist gives thanks with rejoicing for the Word of God which he is privileged to hear at a definite place, as for instance in Jerusalem, and which is given to him through certain persons, through the Levites and kings, and by certain disciples, as the tribes of Israel. For what a great pity is it to seek God's Word everywhere and not to be able to find it anywhere. The children of Israel experienced this when running after idols, and we when going on pilgrimages and running into monasteries.

But our Jerusalem is the holy Church, while Christ is our temple, our holy place, altar, and mercy seat, before whom, from whom, and with whom we should seek and hear His Word. —First Sunday after Epiphany.

### Psalm 139

Psalm 139 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving. In it the Psalmist praises God that He has provided for him in such a remarkable manner and that He still directs and guides him in all his works, words, thoughts, and wherever he stands, goes, sleeps, or works. Yea, even in his mother's womb, before He was created, He was with him, determining how he was to be formed and how long he was to live. As if he were to say: It does not belong to man's skill or power how he is to live, act, speak, think, where and when, whence and whither he is to come and go. On the contrary, all of it is exclusively God's work and skill.

What then are the abominable and ungodly people doing who do not believe this but who want to be pious of themselves with their offensive works? They want to be instrumental in having done what they have done and want credit, praise, and honor from God for it. Although they do not bring forth one word by themselves and do not have strength of their own to think one thought. Added to this they do not know what they are doing, how they have been created, how they live, speak, and think.

Since everything then that we are and do is God's work and skill, why do men presume upon the great work of making themselves pious, why do they boast of a free will and want to free themselves by work from sins and death, etc.? Such persons cannot speak properly of God and his works. Protect me, O Lord, from all this and try me and cleanse my heart that I may stay on the right way which remains forever, etc.—First Sunday after Epiphany.

### Psalm 19

Psalm 19 is a prophecy pertaining to the Gospel, how it is to go out into all the world as far as the heavens are and to be preached day and night. This is to be done not only in the Jewish but in all languages, even as the sun, by way of comparison, shines and warms in all places. Thus also the new law of the Gospel is to shine, teaching diverse things and enlightening, comforting, purifying, etc., all the world. Herewith he is at the same time annulling the old law that was not so pure, clear, lovely, and lasting.

This Psalm belongs to the Third Commandment. For it proclaims the true Sabbath, on which day God's Word is to be taught and believed. —Third Sunday after Epiphany.

### Psalm 93

Psalm 93 is a prophecy pertaining to the Kingdom of Christ in all the world, which is to remain forever. Although the floods and waters lift up their voice, i.e. the raging and roaring of the world are against it and put many to death, yet it is of no avail. Christ is mightier and greater than the world and her prince to boot.

Such kingdom and everything is established by His Word without sword and armor. This Word adorns and sanctifies His house. For that is the true worship that sparkles and shines in this house, namely preaching, praising, and giving thanks. Here no Moses and no Old Testament belong. —Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

Before we bring our translation of some of Luther's *Summarien* to a close, we feel constrained to call attention to a few observations made while translating and retranslating these summaries for the last four issues of our quarterly.

We must begin by stating that Luther's summaries are not mere summations of the contents of each one of the Psalms. We may by way of comparison call the summaries by Briggs in *The International Critical Commentary*, already mentioned,<sup>16</sup> mere summations. This is not said to detract from their value. The very first approach to any one of the 150 Psalms may very well be a mere attempt to gain a general idea of the bare contents of the respective Psalm. This, however, was not the purpose of Luther's summaries. When reading and rereading his summaries one soon gains the strong impression that Luther is rewording and rewriting the Psalms for his German people. It is true that Luther, as has already been pointed out,<sup>17</sup> was strongly opposed to having his *Summarien* replace the Psalms. He does not want his *Summarien* mingled with the Psalter or inserted between the Psalms. He wants the text to remain by itself, nicely separated (*fein ungemengt*). We cannot in our study of the Psalter remind ourselves too often of this demand which Luther has made in the interest of the Hebrew Psalter, if we want to continue to remain close to the original text. But we also do not want to forget the invaluable gift with which Luther has enriched the Church, his *Summarien über die Psalmen*. For by means of them he has succeeded admirably to reword and to rewrite the Psalms, not only for his contemporaries, but also for later generations.

When speaking of rewording and rewriting the Psalms we do not only mean that Luther clothed them in a German dress and garb. He did that and more. He rewrote and reworded them for the New Testament congregation. Again this does not mean that Luther did not make use of the original phrases and expressions of the Psalms. He did. But Luther looked at each Psalm in the light of the New Testament and then rewrote and reworded them for the New Testament congregation. This work, of course, presupposes an interpretation of the Psalms in the light of the New Testament. And on the basis of such an interpretation he translated and transformed each Psalm into the fullness of the New Testament fulfillment. Wherever he interprets a Psalm as a Messianic prophecy he directs the full flow of the Gospel truth, as revealed in the New Testament, into this main channel of the Old Testament revelation, from where it branches out by means of his rewording and rewriting into the tributaries of the Old Testament Scriptures. If Luther already succeeded in doing this by

<sup>16</sup> *Quartalschrift*, January, 1952, p. 41. [Or see p. 3 of this essay – WLS Library Staff]

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42. [P. 4 of this essay – WLS LS]

means of his incomparable translation,<sup>18</sup> how much more did he not accomplish this transformation of the Psalms when summarizing them in the light of the New Testament fulfillment.

Luther's summary of the First Psalm is a case in point. In it he does not at all use the word Law (*Gesetz*) as he does in his translation of the Psalm, but uses the more general term Word of Gott (*Wort Gottes*). We know that Luther had a special liking for this phrase and uses it in his Old Testament translation, where the original does not necessarily demand it and where the King James Version does not think of using it.<sup>19</sup> But when using it in this his first summary, he is not only guided by a certain predilection for this expression, but by the fact that he is seeing this Psalm in the light of the New Testament fulfillment. He does this with so many words when he adds that "this Psalm proceeds from the Third Commandment," i.e. that we are gladly to hear and learn the Word of God, yea, that "it is also included in the Lord's Prayer, in the Second and Third Petition, where we pray for the Kingdom and for His Will, both of which come by His Word."

As regards the 19th Psalm,<sup>20</sup> whose second part (vv. 7–10) is a hymn of praise of the Law of the Lord, Luther is still more explicit when stating that it is a prophecy pertaining to the Gospel. Once in this summary he uses the word "law," but in a manner which leaves no room for doubt that he means the Gospel. He speaks of "the new law of the Gospel," which "is to shine, teaching diverse things and enlightening, comforting, purifying, etc., all the world." Luther goes so far in transforming this Psalm into a Gospel prophecy that he even applies its first part (vv. 1–6), which deals with the creation, to the Gospel. As "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows forth his handiwork," and as the sun goes "forth from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it," thus "the Gospel is to go out into all the world as far as the heavens are and is to be preached day and night." When reading this summary we actually lose sight of the Old Testament Psalm and find our selves transplanted into the New Testament fulfillment. But when we ask how Luther can thus rewrite this Old Testament Psalm, he gives us a very definite answer in this his summary of the 19th Psalm: Having said that the new law of the Gospel is to go out and be preached, he adds: "Herewith he (the Psalmist) is at the same time annulling the old law which was not so pure, clear, lovely, and lasting" and closes his summary by speaking of "the true Sabbath, on which day God's Word is to be taught and believed."

The annulment of the Law, priesthood, and sacrifices, Luther again and again finds taught in the Psalms. Of the sixty translated summaries we have noted six instances where Luther speaks with so many words of the annulment or abrogation or disavowal or ceasing of the Law and the priesthood with its Old Testament sacrifices. Added to these we encounter those passages in which Luther speaks of Him who "alone does God's Will and fulfills the Law," Christ, who "is our temple, our holy place, altar and mercy seat, before whom, from whom, and with whom we should seek and hear His Word." In place of the old law with its sacrifices and holiness, by means of which God's Will is not fulfilled, Luther likes to speak of "a new divine service" and of "a true worship," which "is the giving of thanks, preaching, confessing God's name before all the people." "All of these," he adds, the Psalmist "calls the right sacrifices and service, and repudiates all the other sacrifices which are brought by the mad saints minus the right sacrifices." This "new service" is to be sought in "our

<sup>18</sup> Heinrich Bornkamm in his *Luther und das Alte Testament* has shown by means of many examples and comparisons how Luther in his translation transferred the New Testament language into the Old. An outstanding example, to which Bornkamm calls attention, is Luther's translation of *chesed* with *Gnade*, the New Testament translation for *charis*. *Durch den bewusst eingeführten Begriff der Gnade*, Bornkamm says, *hat Luther einen der wesentlichsten Züge der neutestamentlichen Sprache ins Alte Testament übertragen* (p. 196).

<sup>19</sup> Bornkamm shows in a special chapter on *Wort, Weissage, predigen* (pp. 200ff.), how Luther's preference for this expression grew on him in the course of the revision of his own Old Testament translation. While the Vulgate in Micah 7, 11 translates *choq* boundary, statute with *lex*, Luther after 1525 translates it with *Gottes Wort*. Again in Micah 6, 8 the Vulgate translates *mishpat* with *iudicium*. Luther here has *Wort Gottes* in this well-known verse: *Es ist dir gesagt Mensch, was ist ... nämlich Gottes Wort halten ...*, although in 1525 he still followed the Vulgate and translated *Recht tun*. In 1529 Luther in his short exposition of Psalm 119 still distinguishes between "Wort, Reden, Befehl," etc. In 1531, however, he uses *Wort* or *Worte* for the four different Hebrew terms: *dabar, imra, mishpat, piqqudim*. No less than 45 times the phrase "dein Wort" or "deine Worte" is found in his translation of this Psalm. The Authorized Version has "thy word" and "thy words" 38 times, the Revised Standard Version 27 times. Even when Luther finds one of the four listed Hebrew words in the plural, he often puts it into the singular and translates *Wort*.

<sup>20</sup> *Quartalschrift*, October, 1952, p. 291. [pp 19-20 of this essay – WLS LS]

Jerusalem,” which “is the holy Church,” which God builds and preserves for just these right sacrifices and services.

In his summary of the 16th Psalm, which the reader will find in this issue, Luther embodies all these thoughts in one bold sentence, when he says of this Psalm: “It testifies clearly that it wants to disavow the old law with its sacrifices and services as an idolatry, etc., and wants to elect the other saints and people as a fine heritage.” In view of the fact that Luther lays such emphasis on the “new service” and on the disavowal of the “old service,” it is not surprising that in his summary of Psalm 102 he says of the Old Testament saints that “they would like to serve God in the true Zion, and have the Old Testament cease.” In short, Luther, as no other exegete, sees the New Testament in the Old, i.e. in many Psalms (40, 16, 118 in this issue) he finds that God “promises and institutes the New Testament, in which the righteousness by faith is to be preached in the great congregation, i.e. in all the world, and not the righteousness of sacrifices or of our works.” In other words, the Psalmist, who in the Hundred-eighteenth Psalm “prophesies concerning the Christians and Christ,” must not only have proclaimed “God’s new honor, work, word, and service, which in Christ was to come into the world after the old service,” but must have written Psalms, as for instance the Twenty-third Psalm, in which “*a Christian heart* praises and thanks that He instructs him and keeps him in the right way, comforts and protects him in all need by means of His holy Word.” What then could prevent Luther, who had such an evangelical understanding of the Psalms and for that matter of the whole Old Testament, from “Christianizing”<sup>21</sup> them, as he actually did in his *Summarien* For where there is such praising and giving of thanks, there, as he tells us in his summaries of the Ninety-third and Fifty-third Psalm, “no Moses and no Old Testament belong,” there is “the Gospel and the Kingdom of Christ, which is to come out of Zion.”

*Summarien* that thus channel the Gospel truth of the New Testament into the Old, are indispensable for an evangelical Christian understanding of the Psalms. As we read and reread these summaries, we learn to evaluate the Gospel content of the Psalms anew and to look upon the Psalmist with Luther as “a real master and doctor of the Holy Scriptures,” because “he has understood what it means,” that “He will save Israel from all its sins.”<sup>22</sup>

### Psalm 62

Psalm 62 is a doctrinal Psalm (*Lehrpsalm*), which deals with the vain trust in men and the sure trust in God. There are many who think that they need nothing more if they but enjoy the grace of a prince or lord or the favor of a rich potentate. Consequently they do much mischief, especially if they see “a leaning wall,” i.e. if they notice that some one is not at all gladly seen at court or that he is otherwise in bad or is being persecuted by others without being able to defend himself. They then gain their laurels at his expense and continuously flatter and fawn upon the great lords. But they do not at all see how such trust in men is of no earthly value. They also do not believe it till they experience the utter futility of it. Therefore we have the saying: Trust in God and harm no one. This holds good before God and men. —*Estomihi*.

### Psalm 77

Psalm 77 is a doctrinal Psalm (*Lehrpsalm*). For it serves as an example how one is to comfort oneself in the day of deep sorrow and of a troubled conscience, when God to all appearances is angry with one, etc. In the fourth verse the Psalmist tells us that he had been so troubled that as a result he was not able to sleep and also not able to speak. Also in the eighth, ninth, and tenth verse he gives vent to the same grave thoughts. But this is our solace that one wards off such thoughts (with which one vexes oneself in vain) and instead harbors those thoughts in one’s heart that pertain to the wondrous works of God in the days of old. There one finds that His work at all times has been to help the needy, the afflicted, the forsaken, and to overthrow the secure and proud transgressors, as He did when He led the children of Israel out of Egypt. Therefore His ways are called hidden

<sup>21</sup> Bornkamm in his *Luther und das Alte Testament* (p. 185f.) has a separate chapter on *Luthers Uebersetzung des Alten Testaments ins Christliche* and also calls attention to a study by Fritz Hahn, *Zur Verchristlichung der Psalmen durch Luthers Uebersetzung*.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Quartalschrift*, 1952, for this and some of the preceding references pp. 114, 210, 288, 290, 291, 43.

ways because He is present and helps when one deems everything lost. This indeed is something for one to learn. Thus this Psalm wants to introduce God to us and wants to teach us His manner of helping us, that we do not despair of God when we are in trouble, rather just then with all confidence expect help, and not trust in our own thoughts. —*Estomihi, Oculi*.

### Psalm 23

Psalm 23 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving (*Dankpsalm*). In it a Christian heart praises and thanks God that He instructs him and keeps him on the right way, comforts and protects him in all need by means of His holy Word. The Psalmist compares himself with a sheep that a good shepherd leads to pasture in green grass and beside the cool water. For the sake of comparison he also mentions a table, a cup, oil, terms derived from the Old Testament and its divine worship. All of it he calls the Word of God, even as he also speaks of it as staff, rod, grass, water, and paths of righteousness.

This Psalm belongs to the Third Commandment and to the Second Petition. —*Laetare, Maundy Thursday, Misericordias Domini, Jubilate*.

### Psalm 40

Psalm 40 is a fine Prayer (*Betpsalm*). In it Christ Himself laments and cries out for help against death. He also prophesies clearly that He alone does God's Will and fulfills the Law, and that this has been written of Him in the Book of Moses. Then He repudiates and abrogates the old law with its sacrifices and holiness, because by means of it God's Will is not fulfilled. Not our work and sacrifice, but He Himself and He alone must do it for all of us. Thus He promises and institutes the New Testament, wherein the righteousness of faith is to be preached in the great congregation, i.e. in all the world, and not the righteousness of sacrifices or of our work, which, as He says in the fourth verse, only make proud and false saints, who do not base their hope on God nor on His grace, but on their lies and spurious sanctity. —*Laetare, Cantate*.

### Psalm 22

Psalm 22 is a Messianic Prophecy (*Weissagung*) of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ and of the Gospel which the whole world should hear and accept. More than any Old Testament scripture it clearly interprets Christ's torment on the Cross, how His hands and feet were pierced and His members racked, so that one might have counted them. The like of this one does not find so clearly stated in the other prophets. In addition it is also one of the chief Psalms.

It belongs to the First Commandment, for it proclaims a new divine service. And it is to be found in the First and the Second Petition. —*Judica, Good Friday*.

### Psalm 43

Psalm 43 is similar to the foregoing one and is almost identical with it.<sup>23</sup> For the author of this Psalm also wants to go through light and truth to the house of God, i.e. he wants to let himself be comforted in his tribulation with the Word of God. —*Judica*.

### Psalm 116

Psalm 116 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving (*Dankpsalm*). In it the Psalmist is joyful and grateful that God has heard his prayer and has saved him from the misery of death and the fear of hell, as a few of the former Psalms also testify to such a deep spiritual temptation known to only a few people.

In this Psalm the Psalmist also complains how much he is in trouble as a result of confessing his faith and the truth of God and of declaring the sanctity, virtue, and confidence of all men to be false and nought. The

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Quartalschrift*, April 1952, p. 114. [p. 11 of this essay – WLS LS]

world has no desire to hear and to put up with this and is not able to do it. Consequently the pious must suffer, tremble, and be faint-hearted in divers adversities.

But withal he finds comfort in this that his word is true and that he will carry on all the more. If they pour out upon me from the cup of their anger, good and well, then I shall take from the cup of grace and salvation and spiritually drink my fill. By my preaching I shall encourage them to drink from it, whoever wants to drink with me and draw such comfort from the word of grace. That is our cup and with it we serve God, praise His name, and pay our vows.

This Psalm belongs to the First Commandment in that we have accepted Him as God and have vowed to honor Him as God, to preach and to call upon Him. Here you find again that true worship is the giving of thanks, preaching, confessing God's name before all the people. —*Judica, Rogate*.

### Psalm 118

Psalm 118 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving (*Dankpsalm*) and my favorite and fine *Confitemini*. What the summary is, everyone can read in the Commentary on this Psalm.<sup>24</sup> The Psalmist gives thanks. But he also prophesies concerning the Christians and Christ, the rejected cornerstone, etc.—Easter Sunday, First Sunday in Advent.

### Psalm 16

Psalm 16 is a prophecy (*Weissagung*) of Christ's Passion and Resurrection, as the Apostles have forcefully quoted it, Acts 2 and 13. It testifies clearly that it wants to disavow the old law with its sacrifices and services as an idolatry, etc., and wants to elect other saints and people as a fine heritage.

It belongs to the First, Second, and Third Commandment. For it proclaims God's new honor, work, word, and service, which in Christ was to come into the world after the old service. It is also in the First and Second Petition, etc.—Second and Third Easter Day.

### Psalm 66

Psalm 66 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving (*Dankpsalm*) for all of God's works in that He has often redeemed His people from the power of their enemies and has preserved them, as He for instance did in the midst of the Red Sea. The Scriptures in the Books of Judges and Kings are replete with these deeds. This is something that He daily does also for us, redeems and keeps His own in the true faith in opposition to the devil, spirits, sins, etc.—*Jubilate*.

### Psalm 104

Psalm 104 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving (*Dankpsalm*) for all the works other than the creation of man that God has created in heaven and on earth. The Psalmist tells us how they have been fashioned in good order, in all trustworthiness, and in accord with a wise plan as concerns their workmanship, productiveness, and yield. It also tells us how God counts them one after the other, how heaven is full of light and stands there without pillars and beams as an outspread carpet, the clouds as a vault without base and pillar, the winds flying without wings, and the angels as emissaries coming like a wind and fashioned like flames, etc. Thus the Psalmist sings his hymn and delights and rejoices in God's creatures, so wondrously made and drawn up in such a fine order. But who regards or pays any attention to them? Faith alone and the Spirit do so. —*Cantate, Rogate*.

### Psalm 27

Psalm 27 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving (*Dankpsalm*). At the same time the Psalmist also prays much and comforts in view of the false teachers, whom he calls false witnesses, who commit outrages without any scruples. For they are real mad and daring saints. They bear witness of God in a cock-sure and froward manner, although they are without a call. As we experience it daily, the madder and more ignorant these people are, the bolder and

<sup>24</sup> This Commentary appeared in August of 1530. St. L. Ed. V, 1175ff..

more impudent they are to preach and teach the whole world. No one knows anything; they alone know everything. They even are the cause of war and insurrection against the true saints and the God-fearing.

This Psalm belongs to the Second and the First Commandment and to the First and the Second Petition.  
—*Exaudi.*

### Psalm 51

Psalm 51 is one of the leading doctrinal Psalms (*Lehrpsalm*). In it David teaches us aright what sin is, what the origin of sin is, what harm sin does, how one may rid himself of sin. For in this Psalm and nowhere else is sin set forth so clearly, as something that is inherited and inborn, which no work can counteract, but against which God's grace and forgiveness alone can help us. God must create us anew by His Spirit and must beget us as new beings and creatures. Otherwise sin is so powerful that it also breaks the bones, as he says, instilling us with fear and despair, until His grace comes to comfort us. After we have again become renewed by grace and the Spirit, then we can teach, praise, give thanks, and preach aright, yea, even carry our affliction and cross. All of these he also calls the right sacrifices and service and repudiates all the other sacrifices which are brought by the mad saints minus the right sacrifices.

At the close of this Psalm the Psalmist prays that God may build and preserve Jerusalem for such sacrifices and services. —Pentecost.