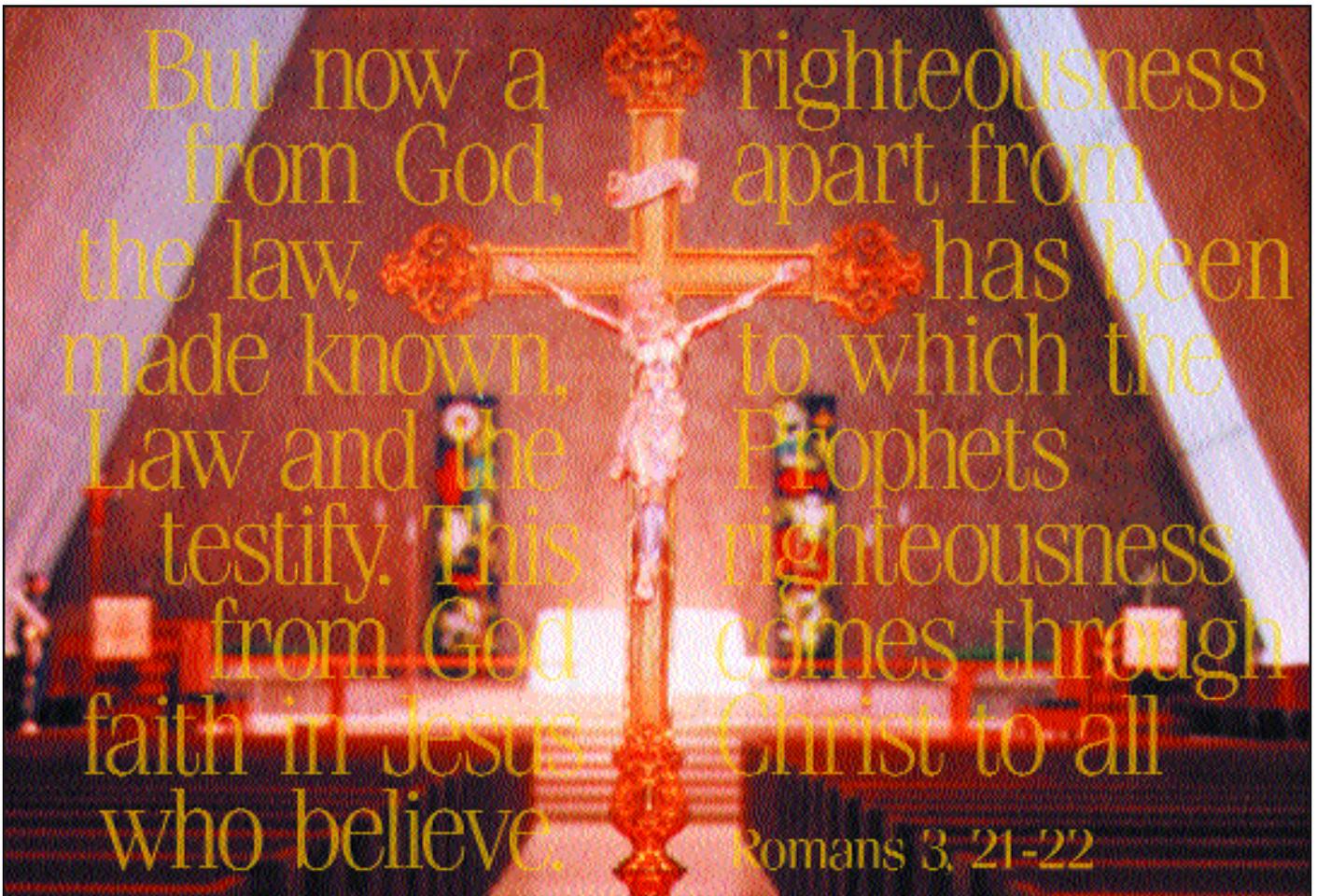


For the

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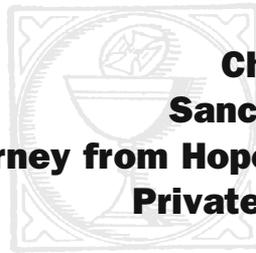
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CONCORDIA
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P R E S S

“Search the Scriptures...

and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). Our Lord’s own words could not be clearer. And note that when He speaks of “the Scriptures,” He is referring to the Old Testament (as is also the case in the Nicene Creed where it states, ‘And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures’). Later, of course, the term was extended to include the New Testament as well.

There were skeptics and heretics already in the early church. Most (in)famous was Marcion, who taught that the Old Testament represented a different god and threw out the whole Old Testament and some of the New Testament. On the whole, though, in the

main catholic confession of the church there never was any serious debate about it until relatively modern times beginning with the eighteenth century and the so-called “Enlightenment”. Martin Luther and most of the Reformation were also certainly no exception!

The ordinary believer certainly makes the same confession today, but is sometimes hard put to apply the confession in detail. Let us start with something that I think most Christians do almost automatically. When we read of “God”, “the Lord”, etc. in the Old Testament, we simply assume, as we should, that this is our God or Lord, the same God who in the fullness of time became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth and who still manifests Himself to us through the Holy Spirit.

Let me call your attention to our liturgical usage. Especially when used in public worship, every psalm is to be concluded with the “Gloria Patri” (Glory be to the Father...). While not commanded, this should not be dismissed as simply a pious, but inert custom. It confesses that we do not “Christianize” the psalms by changing their texts, but that we confess their prolongation or extension into the time of the Holy Spirit, that is, our time and until the end of time.

Sometimes the word “typology” is used to describe the predictive meaning of topics in the Old Testament itself without the illumination of the New Testament (sacrifice and priesthood are two major examples). But the deeper meaning of typology is the recognition that the faith of the Old Testament is essentially of the same type as ours, regardless of surface differences. That is, salvation was not available by works or human merit, but was a free gift of God’s undeserved grace evident in His election of an unworthy people and in His promise of a Savior to come.

That is, we do not “read into” the Old Testament meanings that are not there (although, of course, this is possible). Rather we “read out” of it its full meaning as revealed by Christ in the New Testament. There is no one fully adequate way of expressing this truth but one of my favorites goes back to the church father,



Christ in the Old

לְאוֹר וְאוֹר לְהִשָּׁד שָׁמַיִם מֵר לְמִתּוֹק וּמִתּוֹק לְמֵר : ם
בְּעֵינֵיהֶם . וְנָגַד פְּנֵיהֶם נְבֻנִים :
לְשִׁתּוֹת יֵיז וְאֲנִשְׁרִחִיל לְמִסְךְ שֶׁכֶר :

St. Augustine: “The New Testament is latent in the Old; the Old Testament becomes patent in the New.”

A common picture or metaphor for visualizing such a confession is the bud and the blossom. Anyone who knows the flower will see in its bud what he knows will eventually open into a beautiful flower. Everything is really in the bud, but what is there will only be revealed in the “fullness of time” (“Galatians 4:4). Any attempt to “read” the bud in another way would simply be mistaken.

The Creator has established a genetic connection so that the bud can only become what it is “programmed” to become. We are reminded of Jesus’ frequent use of the word “must” to describe His necessity to fulfill the Scriptures, not only in suffering and dying, but also in rising again (e.g. Mark 8:31; Luke 24:44).



Christians have long spoken of the “pre-existence” of Christ from eternity to eternity (so our Lord Himself in John 8: 58; cf., Colossians 1: 15ff). But there is no Gospel or Good News in His pre-existence, as such. More to the point is that long before the incarnation, God would sometimes reveal Himself to His people in an “incarnational” way. Among the most obvious are various passages where “angel of the Lord” is used interchangeably with “Lord” or “God” alone (e.g. Genesis 22: 15-16; Exodus 3:2).

An incarnational motif is especially prominent in connection with the tabernacle/temple. In various ways God is described as “dwelling” there. The Hebrew word used can refer to anyone’s “dwelling” or “living” in a house or city. In order to distinguish

ordinary “dwelling” from God’s “incarnational” presence in the tabernacle, sometimes the rather artificial word “indwell” is used. The Bible, of course, is very aware that God is omnipresent or that His dwelling is in heaven. The paradox of that same God’s “indwelling” on earth is pondered by Solomon in his prayer at the consecration of the temple (I Kings 8: 27ff.). In fact, God’s tabernacle presence on earth is localized as between the two cherubim above the lid or “mercy seat” of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies (Exodus 25:22).

When the incarnation itself occurred in Jesus’ birth the tabernacle found its fulfillment there. One of the key passages in making the connection is John 1:14, “The Word (Christ) was made flesh and dwelt among us ...” We might also translate “tabernacled among us” to make the connection even more obvious. St. John uses the usual Greek translation for the Hebrew for “indwell” and by a happy coincidence the words in the two languages even happen to sound somewhat alike.

We could trace many other ways where the New Testament shows us how to recognize Christ in the Old Testament. Let us continually pray that the Holy Spirit would take the veil of incomprehension or even unbelief away from our faces when we read the Scriptures (cf. II Corinthians 3: 14-18) and that, as

with His disciples after the resurrection, He would become known to us in the Lord’s Supper (Luke 24: 30-47).

When we read of “God”, “the Lord”, etc. in the Old Testament, we simply assume, as we should, that this is our God or Lord, the same God who in the fullness of time became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth and who still manifests Himself to us through the Holy Spirit.

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Testament

By Rev. Dr. Horace Hummel

תְּהִי הַמִּלְכָּה עִידוֹ וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־אֲדֹנָי יֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא
יְיָ מְלֵאִים אֶת־הַהִיכָל : שְׂרָפִים עֹמְדִים מִמַּעַל לוֹ
וְהִנֵּה־יָאֵר אֶת־פָּנָיו וְיִשְׁכַּח עַל־פָּנָיו וְיִשְׁכַּח עַל־פָּנָיו