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The Whole Counsel of God: A Study of the Development of the Church Year and the Pericopal System

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THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD:
A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF
THE CHURCH YEAR AND THE PERICOPAL
SYSTEM

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Dr. Alfred Fremder

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THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

Since the time of Jesus Christ the church, His Church, has gathered together for fellowship, and worship. It provides a sense of community and strength for the believers. This fellowship provides, and has traditionally provided an opportunity for the celebration of the Sacraments, instruction of the catechumens and the faithful reading of the Scriptures.¹

Within the scope of this paper the cycle of worship will be examined. This cycle of worship, called the "Church Year" has taken two forms. Traditionally, with the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England, the Eastern Rites, and the Lutheran Churches a set pattern or Liturgical Year has been followed. As will be seen this has developed into a rich and complete celebration including the life and ministry of the Savior from His birth and culminating in His Triumphant return. ^{The first half} ~~That~~ is termed the First Semester of the Church Year or the Dominical Semester. This is followed by the Second Semester or the Ecclesial Semester with its stress on the daily march of the church.

There is also a large portion of the Church that has developed a non-liturgical year. Churches in the Reformed or Protestant tradition are included here. Due to their intense rejection of what was not expressly required in the Scriptures, at the time of the Reformation, the Liturgical Year was rejected. Unfortunately this allows a slow and halting progression. In our time fortunately we are seeing within some of these churches a return to a structured Church Year.

It may be asked, "What is the value of a 'liturgical' year."

Luther Reed, a pioneer in the Liturgical Renewal Movement, keenly noted:

The Liturgy and Liturgical Year with their regular unfolding of offering the means of grace, maintain a weekly and seasonal rhythm which keeps the church in spiritual health. They discipline, direct and enlarge the individual religious experience of all individual christians.²

Dr. Reed's point is that the liturgical system keeps the Christian Church moving and includes a broad spectrum of events, doctrines, etc. It prevents a one-sided proclaiming of the "Whole Counsel of God."

In addition to the above mentioned point, Dr. Frederick G. Gotwald lists a three-fold purpose for the Church Year. He contends that it is, or serves historically, Scripturally and practically. It is historical in several ways. The Church Year binds us to the old Jewish year. It stands also as a monument of the triumph of "the Faith" over pagan and barbarian peoples. It also keeps us in agreement with the early church. It is Scriptural. He points to the fact that without the Scripture, on which the Liturgical Celebration is based, there is nothing. The recurring theme of the year is also a Christ-centered statement. It is practical because it keeps focusing the church on the Lord who called her to be, and consecrates her time in Him. It also is education, ^{ed} moving systematically through the Scriptures evenly proclaiming the doctrines there-in found.³

To the above mentioned points of value, Dr. Walker Gwynne includes a fourth point. Through the liturgical cycle we are also reminded of the lives of the Old and New Testament Saints.⁴

In order to understand this thing called the Liturgical Year three things will be considered in the scope of this work:

- I. The Old Testament Worship Year
- II. The Growth of the New Testament Worship Year
- III. The Vehicle of the New Testament Liturgical Year: The Pericopal System

The Old Testament Worship Year

When we consider the worship of Israel, it is important to remember the nature of the thing. Israel's worship did not grow out of a desire to please angry deities. It was obedient response. The worship of the Old Testament people was given to them by the God of creation, the God of their fathers. With this origin in mind a new sense of rejoicing is possible. They were celebrating within a loving and secure relationship. The events involved in the yearly cycle of worship were concrete events. They were the events proclaiming God's activity in the lives of their fathers.

It must be noted that this history was not merely in the past. While the events were in the past, they were also a present reality for Israel. It was a sacred celebration of history which included the individual, linking him with his fathers, a history actualized in the present.⁵

The first element of the Hebrew worship is fundamental, giving to Israel part of its character. That event is the Sabbath. Israel was called in the Commandments to keep this day for the Lord. (Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:14-15). They were told that on the "seventh day" all within Israel were to rest. It must be observed that it was on the same day of the week that God, after having completed His work at creation, Himself had rested. Israel was also called to reflect each Sabbath on their deliverance from the slavery of Egypt. It is fair to say, since the day was a day of freedom, it was a day

of solemn celebration.⁶ Originally it was to take place in the home of each member of Israel. The weekly gathering in the synagogue for Sabbath commemoration was an outgrowth of the Babylonian Exile.

As time progressed, however, the Sabbath which was intended to bring joy⁷ became a burden placed on the necks of the children of Israel. By the time of Jesus the burden's full weight was upon the people. In Mark 2:27, Jesus reminds the people of the original purpose saying that it was "created for man."

The Holy Convocations

The next group of Hebrew celebrations may be characterized as times when Israel would gather together "en masse" in Holy Convocation. These were times, unlike the Sabbath, for national rejoicing and sacrifice. God commanded in Exodus (16:17) that "every male shall appear before the Lord God three times during the year." The times were at the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths. It should be noted that apart from any theological import, these times of celebration corresponded to various Palestinian agricultural seasons. The time of the Passover comes during the time when the Jordan was flooding. It was also the time of the Barley Harvest in the Maritime Plain, and the ripening of the wheat in the Jordan Valley. At the time of the Pentecost, which was fifty days after the Passover, wheat and almonds were ready for harvest. At the time of Trumpets and Day of Atonement, the season of summer was giving way to winter. It was also the time when dates and olives were to be gathered.⁸

The first of the Holy Convocations which shall be considered is the Passover, or Pasche. This feast above all of the others made Israel what it was (Ex. 12.13). This is the feast which celebrated God's calling of Israel

out of the bondage of slavery in Egypt. This was accomplished when God sent the Angel of Death to claim all of the first-born males in the land. For the Hebrews this death of the first-borns was averted by the slaying of a male lamb that was one year old and without blemish. The blood from this animal was painted on the door posts of the house signaling the Angel of Death to "passover." As Israel continued, at first with more or less regularity, to celebrate the Passover, it came to commemorate the freedom from bondage with God's judgment on the nations and giving of life to Israel.

In conjunction with the Feast of the Passover was celebrated the Feast of Unleaven Bread, (Ex. 12:18-19). As the Hebrews left Egypt it was with great haste, and there was not time for the preparation of leaven dough. This feast then was to call to the memory of Israel their haste in departing the land of bondage. The date of this unitive assembly was Abib (Nisan) 14-21.

The second of the Holy Convocations is the Feast of Pentecost. Originally it was called the Feast of Weeks (Deut. 16:9-10) or Feast of Harvest (Ex. 23:16,19). This feast was to be primarily celebrated when they were in the land of promise, when God had blessed the produce of the land. As it developed, God's People also commemorated the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai.⁹ Originally the Sinai events took place fifty days after the first Passover, when God took His people from Egypt (Ex. 19:20).

The third divinely commanded Holy Convocation centered around the Day of Atonement. The first event in this celebration was the Rosh Hashanna celebration. It took place on the first day of the seventh month. Rosh Hashanna, the "head of the year" (civil New Year) was a day of rejoicing for the harvest, offering of sacrifices and rest. It was the day when Israel remembered all that God had done for them in the past year. It was also a

day of judgment which began the time of penitence which ended on Yom Kippor, the Day of Atonement.¹⁰

The Great Day of Atonement followed. It was celebrated on the tenth day of the month of Tishri. Accomplished within the scope of this Holy Convocation was God's judgment on sin, and His forgiveness of the same, (Lev. 16:23, 26-29; 23:26-32; Num. 29:7-11). On the Day of Atonement the primary focus of the day was on two goats. One, the scapegoat, received the sins of all of Israel. It was then driven out from the people. The second goat was the sacrifice for sins. As time progressed the day came to "elevate" the teaching that we are reconciled to God only as we seek reconciliation with our neighbors."¹¹

This cycle is completed by the celebration of the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles. This feast began on Tishri 15, and ended on Tishri 22. During this time Israel was commanded to live in booths (Lev. 24:39-44). This was to remind them of their life and travel and hardships endured in the years spent in the wilderness. It was also characterized by thanksgiving for the year-end harvest (Ex. 23:16; Deut. 16:13).¹²

To briefly summarize the Hebrew worship year we note George Gibson's thematic overview. The Passover commemorates Israel's deliverance from bondage, celebrated during the spring. During the Pentecost, a lesser agricultural festival, the Hebrews celebrated the giving and receiving of the Law. The Feast of Tabernacles dealt with the years that Israel spent in the wilderness and thanksgiving. Finally Israel also celebrated the weekly Sabbath or rest.¹³

Later Additions

To conclude the overview of the Hebrew worship two additional festivals deserve comment. While they were not specifically commanded in the Law, their observance was required. By the authority of the "church" the Feast of Purim and the Dedication (Feast of Lights) were to be celebrated. Their significance was such that even the Savior observed them.

The Feast of Purim is commanded in the Book of Esther (9:21-28). Celebrated on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, this event originated during the Babylonian Exile. It called to mind the deliverance from the suffering and genocide planned by the official Haman, that was achieved by a Jewish woman named Esther who was the queen of King Ahasuerus.

The Feast of Lights is an out-growth of the Maccabean period. Celebrated on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev (Cheslew) it proclaims the triumph over Antiochus Epiphanes in 162 (?) B.C., (1 Macc. 4:52). The original events commemorated the rebuilding and the rededication of the Temple which had been profaned by Antichus' men.

The Vehicle of Israel's Worship

The question that is now asked is, "In what way did Israel's children transmit their system of worship?" Realizing that God's revelation was to be passed to the following generations must have caused some action to take place. In fact, the celebrating of God's activity was involved in every portion of life. It began in the home. Throughout the Law, people are told by Moses to tell their children God's Word. In one such instance (Deut. 32:45-7) Moses charges the people in this very way: meaning most naturally in the home. This pattern is still seen today.

The second important place that was used by Israel for the celebration of God's Word was the Tabernacle, or after the time of Solomon, the Temple in Jerusalem. It was here that God commanded all of Israel to gather for the three Holy Convocations. It was here, especially during the Convocations, that the Scriptures were read and the sacrifices were made.

The third means of Israel's worship, while it is not divinely commanded, has proven to be the most lasting. During the time of the Exile in Babylon, when Israel could not worship as God had commanded, the need to maintain their identity as God's people was real. In rudimentary fashion the Synagogue was formed. It was a natural extension of the temple service,¹⁴ where, while not sacrificing, the people remembered God's mighty work.

The Synagogue, for this study is important because it established a pattern that is reflected in the worship of the New Testament people.

According to Lucien Deiss, a Roman Catholic scholar in France, the origin of the Synagogue is between the time of Ezra and the middle of the third century. He also contends that the time in exile was favorable for the development of it.¹⁵ This is to say, as above, the place of sacrifice which was central to Israel's worship was not available. Since their religious continuity could no longer depend upon the Temple, they sought their identity in the reading of the Scriptures that were at hand. This would have primarily involved the reading of the Law.¹⁶ It should also be noted that while the Synagogue was never intended to replace the Temple and its worship, in our day it has.

As was mentioned, during the service, the Law was read. It was this that kept Israel in touch with who they were. Concerning this reading several things must be noted. The first is, that very naturally, at the time of

the various Feasts, the material from the Pentateuch dealing with it was read. Secondly, it is noted, that on the Sabbath (unless it was a Feast) there was a sequential reading, a "lectio continua" of the Pentateuch. Deiss rightly concludes two things: a) the people knew how to apply or adapt the Word of God to a situation of need; b) they were proclaiming that all of the Scriptures were important to and for their faith.¹⁷

Fr. Deiss also notes that there developed two different cycles of reading. The first cycle of the reading of the Law grew out of the Palestinian branch of Judaism. This cycle was divided into 154 sections covering three years. The second cycle was divided into 43 "sedarim", dividing the Law for reading in one year. It was developed by the people who were in Babylon.¹⁸ He also states that since the Law was given to the community, and belonged to all, anyone could read. There could be, he notes, seven or more readers on a Sabbath.¹⁹

The second basic element of the Synagogue service to be considered is the readings from the Prophets. The possible introduction of this reading may be safely dated around B.C. 300. Seemingly, the original purpose was to interpret or provide commentary on the section of the Torah for that day. Deiss also notes that it could be omitted.²⁰

The final element of the Synagogue service that we note is the use of the Psalter. This section of the Scriptures developed into the song and prayer book of Israel. It is possible that its five-fold division corresponded to the Pentateuchal divisions. As for their use during the year Deiss notes for example that Pss. 113-118, the Hallel, were used for the Passover time, or again Pss. 120-134 were used as Pilgrim Psalms, as people came up to Jerusalem. He sees Ps. 29 used for the Feast of Tents, etc.²¹

The above section, dealing with the worship of Israel, while not exhaustive, shows that Israel lived and moved through the constant repetition of God's Word and grew under that same Word. Through it the Hebrews were also made partakers with their fathers in what God had done.

The Christian Church Year

As God's people, we too, are encouraged by the writer to the Hebrews, "not to forsake the assembling together of the saints as some do." Just as Israel, God's Old Testament church, we too have as his New Testament people a worship year which is rooted in the Word. While our year is not given by divine proclamation, a pattern or type was provided in the worship of Israel.²² This is not to say that we have the old obligatory system of sacrifice. Yet we can see, as the early church began to worship, a thematic connection and reconsecration of the days of the Old Testament Worship Year.²³

This reconsecration which formed the Worship Year of the church did not happen over night. It was a growing process of type transformation which by the end of the fourth century had produced the frame work which substantially remains with us to this day.²⁴ We note, too, that various things shaped this frame, which consists basically of the Easter (Pasche) and Pentecost cycles and the Nativity Cycle. For example, the timing of the Pasche and Pentecost are directly determined by the Old Testament year, while the Nativity cycle developed for doctrinal and practical reasons.²⁵

In preparation for the study of the Christian Church Year the major divisions must be noted. The first half of the Church Year is the "Semester Domini" or the Festival Semester. This semester deals with the personal events in the earthly ministry of the Savior. The second semester is the

"Semester Ecclesia" or the non-festival half of the Church Year. This second half deals with Jesus' teachings, miracle, parables, etc.

An additional comment is in order. It must be realized that the church, like Israel, as it celebrates the Church Year, celebrates Sacred History. That is, the Church celebrates the activity of the God-man, Jesus, as He provided for mankind the needed salvation. If the Savior is not at the center of the church's worship and liturgical year, there is just a "pious" nothing instead of a Christian Church Year.

Elements of the Church Year

The elements that are fundamental to the worship of the church are the Lord's Day, the unitive Christian Pasche including the Pentecost, (which will be considered separately) and the unitive Nativity celebration.

The primary element in the development of the Church Year was the desire to proclaim the Scriptures and celebrate the Eucharist.²⁶ This became the focal point of the weekly worship of the church. The day of worship which the church picked was the first day of the week. It was, if you will,¹¹ the church's commemoration of the Fourth (Third) Commandment.¹¹ It was, however, not a day like the Jewish Sabbath.²⁷ The basic theme of the assembling was the resurrection of Jesus. It was, if you will, a little Easter.²⁸

The first day of the week was celebrated as the Lord's day we know as early as the time of the writing of the Revelation. John, the Apostle, even notes this day as the day on which he received his revelation. We may conclude then that it was already known by the church at large. In keeping with the Jewish way of day division the celebration would have begun at

6:00 P.M., on Saturday. A. A. McArthur notes that Augustine in 396 A.D. still maintained that principle.²⁹

But as history is viewed, it must also be mentioned that the early church held the Sabbath (Sat.) and the Lord's day (Sun.) They would have come together on Saturday and continued their celebration into the early hours of Sunday. The unitive celebration was held in high regard for a number of years. Bishop Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth century still called them "Sister days." Especially in the East, the Sabbath for many years dealt with the Creation, and the Lord's Day dealt with the Resurrection of Jesus, or the New Creation.³⁰

As time progressed the celebration of the Sabbath, as such, came into disuse. There are, however, some notable exceptions. The church has continued to celebrate "vigils", celebrations that begin the night before the various Feasts. Among the "vigils" the most notable is the Easter Vigil which is celebrated by the liturgical churches.³¹ In the Lutheran Tradition, it is safe to state that the Vigil which is still observed is the Christmas Vigil in the form of the Christmas Eve services. Since, however, it doesn't always fall on a Saturday, it is not a strict "Sabbath" type of commemoration.

Today it may be observed, on the part of many that there is a different kind of Lord's Day celebration. Today there has been a return to the Lord's Day as the Sabbath. The theme has been transformed from rejoicing to the solemn rest of the Jews. Gibson notes that this began to surface around the year 200 A. D.³² Especially since the upsurge of "reformed" theology the true Lord's Day significance of rejoicing in the victory over sin and death has been obscured. This is, to repeat the judgment of A. A. McArthur, "a retreat from the height of the first century victory over Judaizing Christianity."³³

The Major Christian Festival Cycles

While the Lord's Day celebration is the weekly activity of the church, there is more. There are three major, unitive cycles that form the basis around which the Liturgical Year turns. The events are the Easter, Pentecost, and Nativity Festivals, with their days before and after.

The first that is to be considered is the Easter cycle. This festival, above all of the others, forms the core of the Christian proclamation. St. Paul tells us in fact, "If Christ were not raised, your faith would be in vain , . . ." (I Cor. 15:17).

Dr. George Gibson states that the Easter Celebration was known to the disciple of John the Apostle, Polycarp. The date is approximately A.D. 100. In the early church, this occasion included the observance of the crucifixion as well as the resurrection of the Savior. It is also noted that this was the occasion for baptisms.³⁴

The indication is that the early church celebrated what we now celebrate as Good Friday and Easter together. The Gospels record that these events took place originally during the Passover of the Jews, with its celebration of the deliverance from death and bondage. Since the theme for the church is basically the same, that of Jesus' victory for the church over death and sin, Gibson views the Easter of the Church as an adaptation of the ancient Passover which was as a tradition still alive at that time.³⁵ For A. A. McArthur the similarity is sufficient to term the unitive passion/resurrection event the Christian Pasche. He also notes that it was not until the time of John Chrysostom (388) that a true separation of the events began, with further division by the time of Augustine about A. D. 400.³⁶ The events that were celebrated in this new Pasche, as has been noted, took place in and around

the events of the Jewish Passover. The question that faced the church was, however, when to celebrate the Pasche. Some maintained that the proper time was Nissan 14, without special attention to the resurrection emphasis of the Lord's Day which was central. Gwynne notes that already in A. D. 136, the church was trying to determine the celebration date. He cites the Eastern Christians as celebrating Nissan 14, regardless of the day, while those in the west always concluded their Pasche on the Sunday following the Paschal Moon.³⁷ The emphasis of the celebration in each case was somewhat different. For the east, the theme would center more around the suffering of the Savior, while the center for the west was the resurrection. It was not until the time of the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, that the Eastern Churches were celebrating the Resurrection on Sunday.³⁷

Not much is known about the contents of the service. It is perhaps, knowing the theme, obvious to note that the key element was the Resurrection, and the new life that followed. In this context, McArthur noted that the celebration began Saturday evening in the third century with its conclusion during the early morning hours of Sunday. Included also in the service were the rite of Baptism, which was known to be celebrated in Rome by A.D. 215, and the Lord's Supper, which Tertullian noted as natural.³⁸

In the Easter Cycle, the celebration of the "Great Week" or "Holy Week" is immediately preceding the Pasche. From the start of the celebration of this week it seems to have been a rehearsal of the historical events of the last week in the Savior's humiliation.³⁹ The worship which centered around Jerusalem began six days prior to the Pasche event in Bethany. The next day the church gathered on the slope of the Mount of Olives and entered from there into Jerusalem.⁴⁰ It is also known that by A. D. 397, the Eucharist was being celebrated on Maunday Thursday, at least in Carthage.⁴¹

There is one other element that must be mentioned in the context of the Great Week. Since Baptisms were conducted within the context of the Pasche Celebration, it is natural that the church would use the time just prior, as a time of examination for the Catechumens.⁴²

The segment that begins the whole Easter Cycle is the period which we now know as Lent. There has been a great shift since the early days in its significance.

Originally the period of Lent was not an historical preparation for the Passion.⁴³ In an unChristian world a period of preparation would not have been possible. It was not until the time of Athanasius that it was in open use. He notes it in his letters as a "forty day period" in A.D. 329.⁴⁴ In the beginning, however, it was a brief one or two day fast prior to the Pasche proper. By the time of Hyppolytus and Tertullian a two day period was common.⁴⁵

It would also appear that what is now called Lent was used for a period of instruction before Baptism at Easter. While the fourth century was a period of change, from it still comes an example of the highly developed instructional materials used during that time. In the middle of the century, Cyril of Jerusalem had a series of 18 lectures on the faith which were to be given before the Pasche.⁴⁶ The "Pilgrimage of Etheria" written around the year A.D. 400, notes that an eight week pre-Easter series had developed in Jerusalem. The first five weeks were used for the exposition of the Scriptures with the remaining weeks used to explain the Creed. However, it must be noted, while there was a concentration on the catechumens, the whole church joined in the experience.⁴⁷

The understanding of Lent was, however, changing. An example may be seen in the questioning which an Egyptian Monk, named Cassius, addressed to

his abbot, Theonas, before the fourth century was complete. By this time the Pre-Easter period had, by the Council of Nicea, been enlarged to forty days. The monk's question was basically, "Why?" The response which Theonas gave points that the period was being viewed as a tithe of time.⁴⁸

There is some question, however, about how the forty day period developed. Depending upon the local custom, it could have been spaced over six, seven or eight weeks, depending on the number of days not observed as a partial fast. The standard length (excluded from among the days being Sunday) was a period of six weeks. This only yields thirty-six days. In order to complete the forty day season, Pope Gregory, in the sixth century established Ash Wednesday, four days before the first Sunday in Lent as the beginning.⁴⁹ As the time continued to shape the season, and meaning, the forty days came to signify several things. It could symbolize the time that Moses spent on Mt. Sinai; Israel's forty years in the wilderness, or the forty days of the tempting of Jesus.⁵⁰

At this point it is necessary to note a late addition in the Pre-Easter or Lenten period. Lent by the sixth century had grown into a time of great soberness and very solemn preparatory time for the Easter Celebration. A pre-preparatory time was needed. This Pre-Lent period was three Sundays in length. Gibson suggests that it was originally only meant to fill in between Epiphany and the Lenten Cycle. Concerning its development he quotes Frank E. Wilson, who maintains it dealt with the "Christian necessity of stiffening Spiritual determination in anticipation of the self-imposed restrictions which must be faced in the Lenten Season."⁵¹

The three Pre-Lent Sundays became part of the Church Year in the sixth century. The third of the Sundays, "Quinquagesima", appears to have

been in Rome by A. D. 525. The second one, "Sexagesima" also emerged during that time. These were both opposed by the Council of Orleans in A. D. 541. The first of the Pre-Lent Sundays, "Septuagesima," was finally instituted by Gregory the Great, A.D. 590-591.⁵²

The Easter Celebration is followed by a period of days until the Pentecost. This post-resurrection time was a period of great rejoicing, of triumph. For Origen it was a period of fifty days in which the church proclaimed especially the "triumph of Christ".⁵³

The second major cycle of the church year is in reality the conclusion of the Easter Cycle; the Pentecost Cycle. In retrospect, it can be seen that liturgical time and historical time during this period run in conjunction with each other.⁵⁴ Included within this cycle is the unitive Ascension/Pentecost Festival. and beginning with it is the Post-Pentecost progression of the church proclaiming her triumph in Christ.

The significance of this celebration is an adaptation or completion of the original Hebrew Pentecost.⁵⁵ As was noted, the Children of Israel fifty days after the Passover celebrated the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. It was a ratification of God's Covenant with them. For the New Covenant people the celebration was much the same. The church in the Pentecost event celebrated God's pouring out of the Holy Spirit, fifty days after the Pasche of the Christian church. For the early Christians it was a ratification of the Covenant that God had made with them in Jesus Christ. For the Jews it was a harvest celebration. For the church it was the celebration of the harvest of souls that began on that original day.⁵⁶ If Paul's desire to celebrate Pentecost in Jerusalem is true, and it is, we may assume that the church as a whole also viewed it as important and celebrated the event from early times.

The event of the unitive Pentecost is different than our present day Pentecost. From the beginning, it would appear, the early church celebrated two events on the day of the Pentecost, both Pentecost and the Ascension. Thus they commemorated Jesus assuming His rightful place next to the Father, and the Savior, true to His word, sending the Holy Spirit to the Church.⁵⁷ The Council of Nicea, A.D. 325, also confirmed the festive nature of the event when they decreed that during this time there be not kneeling during the worship services.⁵⁸

The changes, which caused the liturgical celebration with which the church today is familiar, began to take place in the last half of the fourth century. Chrysostom in A.D. 387, notes that a type of Ascension service was beginning to evolve in Antioch.⁵⁹ In A. D. 400, Etheria reports that in Jerusalem an Ascension type service was held. While this is noted, the point is also made that on the Pentecost, both the Ascension and the giving of the Spirit themes were combined.⁶⁰ But it was not until sometime before the tenth century A.D., that the unitive nature was finally completely abandoned.⁶¹

In the context of the Pentecost Cycle there is one more day which requires some comment, Trinity Sunday. This Sunday, the octave of Pentecost closes the Pentecost Cycle and the Semester Domini, and begins the Semester Ecclesia. The theme of the Sunday is the Holy Trinity, and at least in many Lutheran Churches is commemorated by the uses of the Athanasian Creed. Relative to the rest of the Church Year, this celebration originates late. There is no mention of it prior to the tenth century. Originating in the Low Countries or possibly England, it was not officially recognized in the Roman Church until A.D. 1334, when Pope John XXII made it a Feast for the entire church.⁶²

The uses of this pivotal day has varied. The older traditional or liturgical church (the Roman and Orthodox Catholic Churches) have called the Sundays in the half of the church year that this Sunday begins "Sundays after Pentecost." On the other hand, the newer traditional or liturgical churches (especially the Anglican and Lutheran Churches) have termed Sundays in the second half of the Church Year as "Sundays after Trinity".⁶³ Gibson notes that the emphasis of "after Pentecost" or "after Trinity" is different. The focus of the former being the "worldwide character of the church", while the latter centers upon the doctrine of God as it is conveyed "in the classic formula of the Holy Trinity".⁶⁴

The last major division of the Church Year to be considered is the unitive Epiphany celebration. Also called the "Manifestation" or Theophany, which is celebrated on January 6, it has as a main thrust Jesus being revealed. The manifestations included Jesus' birth, the adoration of the Magi, and Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan.⁶⁵ Of all the feasts of the church, it seems to be the last to come onto the scene, McArthur sees its origin in Egypt, in the second century.⁶⁶ It should also be noted that Clement of Alexandria cites it around A.D. 200.⁶⁷

The need soon arose for the church to develop two events from the unitive Epiphany event. Epiphany itself with its revelation theme was fine, but the growing need to combat the Arian heresy demanded a more careful exposition of the Doctrine of the Incarnation. After A.D. 325, due to the events that took place at Nicea, the specific Nativity Celebration began to appropriate its own specific character which stressed the eternal God becoming man in Jesus Christ while remaining God.⁶⁸ Concerning its placement in the Church Year, some practical considerations were made. There were during the

early years of the church many mystery cults that were attracting the people. One such cultic group centered its worship around the sun with the "Natalis Invicti," (birth of the sun festival), which was celebrated around the time of the winter solstice. It has been suggested that the church's placement of Christmas was meant to "crowd out" the pagan influence.⁶⁹ By A.D. 388, a separate Nativity Feast, according to John Chrysostum, was being celebrated in Antioch after having been introduced from Rome.⁷⁰

Thus, it appears in the Church Year of today, the Nativity and the Epiphany. The former, while a younger feast, has become the second most important feast in the year of the church, proclaiming the incarnation of the Christ. The latter celebration, which is older, has in practice been overshadowed. Its emphasis, especially for Gentile Christians is great. The stress is that the Christ was revealed for all of mankind. This universal character is seen in the Adoration by the Magi and by God's mark of approval at His Baptism. The Savior's great power is revealed at the wedding feast at Cana.⁷¹

In the Church Year, just as the Pentecost's timing is dependent upon Easter, the timing of a group of days is dependent upon the date of the Nativity celebration. In terms of the Savior's life they begin with the very conception in the account of the Annunciation to Mary which is celebrated March 25. The record continues after the birth of Jesus to reveal His proper acceptance as a Child of Israel in the celebration of His circumcision of January 1. A third day is noted. Forty days after Jesus' birth, Mary had to undergo the rite of Purification at the Temple in Jerusalem. At that same time Jesus, the first born of Mary and Joseph, was to be presented to the Lord, also in the Temple. It was then, on February 2, that the celebration of the Purification and Presentation, which also involved the meeting of

Simeon and Anna, took place. The stress of all of the events following the birth is upon the complete obedience of Mary and Joseph in fulfilling the commands of the Law of God.⁷²

The final element in the Nativity Cycle is the season of Advent. The object of Advent is preparation for the Nativity of Christ, both in the commemoration of His birth and in anticipation of His Second Coming.⁷³

The season was known to be late in its development. It seems to have been known by A.D. 380 in Spain. At that time, it was a three week period prior to the Epiphany. It seems in general to have been in Gaul near the end of the fifth century. The Council of Tours in A.D. 565 made the preparation for the Nativity a six week term.⁷⁴ Generally now, the church begins Advent on the Sunday nearest to St. Andrew's Day (Nov. 30). This produces a four week Advent Season.⁷⁵

To conclude the comments on the Church Year, mention must be made of Saint's Day Celebrations. The original purpose was, indeed, honorable. They were to call attention to those who had gone to their rest in the faith, reminding those who were yet alive of the connection with the perfected saints. It is probable that these celebrations began at the graves of the various early martyrs on the anniversary of their deaths.⁷⁶

These days developed into a worshipping of the saints themselves. This martyrology and also the worship of Mary became a religion of second rank. In these celebrations there was a strong appeal to the love of the miraculous which is the mark of superstitious populations.⁷⁷ The abuses were great enough for the Council of Nicea, A.D. 787, to judge them harshly.⁷⁸ Gibson notes that in order to combat the heightened counter-religion, days such as Corpus Christi Day, the Feast of the Sacred Heart, and others developed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁷⁹

The Vehicle of the Church Year

As has been seen, the Church Year developed over the course of years into what is known today. While the majority of the developing took place by the fourth century, some took place after that. The question that yet remains is, "How has the rich Liturgical Year been maintained, and communicated?" The answer may be found as one looks through the various "Holy Books" (material used in worship) used by liturgical church bodies. Among these books will be found a lectionary. Like the Church Year this, too, has developed.

Contained within the Lectionary is a series of specific readings or pericopes appointed for specific services. With the Church Year, the purpose of the pericopes is to assure movement. It guarantees a sound and complete teaching of the fundamentals of the faith.⁸⁰ This is done through the regular proclaiming of the essential doctrines of the Church. This is not to say there is only one system appropriate for use. Luther Reed points out that "liturgical practice, development and reform (which must be constant) are all expressions of the living church".⁸¹ Indeed, change has and must continue to take place as the church continues to live under the Word.

The pattern for the reading of the Scriptures by the New Testament people may be found in the Synagogue Service. It was seen earlier that there was a continuous reading or "lectio continua" of the Law and the Prophets. This was at first the only Scripture available to the believers, many of whom were converted Jews.

As time passed, and the writers of the New Testament did their work, new readings were added. The additions were not to the exclusion of the Old Testament material. Due to the date of writing, the Epistles and finally

the Gospels became part of the worship.⁸² Reed notes that the probable practice would be for someone to begin reading, and would upon the indication from the bishop, stop. This developed into a fixed selection. Appropriate starting and stopping points, along with homily references, or the lives of saints were then compiled into "Comes" volumes (companion volumes). These in turn developed into the Gospel and Epistle books that are still used in some traditions today. This in time gave way to the full Lectionary which is commonly used today.⁸³

As was noted, the early church began with a continuous reading of the Scriptures . But like the Jews, they were able to apply certainlections to specific days, thus interrupting the continuous flow for a time. The days and festivals that would first have obtained a particular reading were Easter, Pentecost, and Nativity events.⁸⁴ Reed points out that it was not until the fifth century, in Gaul, that a complete series of selected lessons for all of the Sundays and Feasts gained general acceptance.⁸⁵

Two basic types of Lectionary finally developed. The first to be noted is the Eastern Lectionary Type. In general, there is a heavy use of the Old Testament seen in this type.⁸⁶ This character could have developed because of the relative geographic proximity with Israel, or to the large number of Jewish converts in the churches of that area.

When considering the history of the Roman Lectionary, there are three periods that can be seen. The first period ends officially in A.D. 1334.⁸⁷ This was the date of official recognition for the Festival of the Holy Trinity. While some have suggested that the early development may be attributed to Jerome, this is not likely. This period had, however, little uniformity. It also appears that it was not until the eighth or ninth

centuries, that the Roman Rite became prominent. One thing that set it apart from other systems was that it lacked the usage of an Old Testament Lesson.⁸⁸

There is within the Roman Church a notable two-fold exception to the omission of the Old Testament Lesson. The first part of the exception is the Ambrosian Rite. This rite was strongly influenced by the East, and retained the use of the Old Testament Lesson. The rite originated in Milan, and has been used there since the late fourth or fifth century, even though strongly opposed and condemned at times.⁸⁹ The second notable exception is the Mozarabic Rite. This system too, was independent of Rome, with its different pericopes and the usage of the Old Testament Lection. Common in Spain after A.D. 711, its use is now restricted to certain chapels in Toledo and Salamanca.⁹⁰ It was finally the Council of Trent that granted them official recognition.

The second period in the development of the Roman Lectionary begins after the official recognition of the Festival of the Holy Trinity, in A.D. 1334. These lectionaries included the Trinity celebration and the celebration of some important saint's days. Among them the Feast Day for Saints Peter, Paul, Lawrence and Michael would be included.⁸⁷

The third developmental type comes out of the sixteenth century. It is this basic type that forms the basis for the Roman Missal, the Book of Common Prayer in the Anglican Church, and the Lutehran Church orders.⁸⁷ Several features deserve noting. The type has traces of a "lectio continua" of the Gospel of Matthew from the Third to the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, and in Epistles for the Sixth to the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity. This type also reveals a trace of the Gallican uses with John read in the Spring, Luke for the Summer, and Matthew during the Autumn.⁹¹

It was during the Reformation Era that pericopal systems became extremely important or fell into disuse. The elevated importance of the Word for Lutherans and other more liturgical bodies gave to the pericopal system a renewed value. For people among the Zwinglians and Calvinists, the lectionary system found the greatest opposition. Their rejection of everything traditional included abandoning this, too.⁹² It has not been until the middle of this century that some of these "reformed bodies" again began to see the value of an ordered lection system.

While Lutherans are traditionally liturgical, the pericopal system has met with some resistance here, too. During periods of extreme "rationalism" the strongest opposition has come. Among the most notable opponents of the pericopal system have been such men as Mosheim, Herder, and Schleiermacher.⁹³

Within the Lutheran Church today, there are two basic systems being used. Until recent years the Standard Series was used. The reformers of the sixteenth century basically retained what they knew. In the middle 1940's some revision was done by American Lutherans. The Joint Commission on the Liturgy during this time constructed a series of Old Testament Lessons. The intention was to return to the ancient practice which, in the worship service, proclaimed the "Jewish Roots". This lesson is dependent upon the theme for the day. For the people of the Joint Commission, the Standard Epistles were the word of Christian Law, "elevated to the New Testament Level." They were to express or expand the Gospel in a practical way. The Gospel lection was traditionally, and did in this series remain the liturgical summit of the first part of the "Missa Catechumenorum" (Office of the Word). It is the Gospel alone that establishes the theme for the day.⁹⁴

While there were no major changes, or omissions, some shifts and observations must be noted. Generally speaking, there is no basic thematic connection between the Epistle and the Gospel during the Semester Ecclesia. A "lectio continua" has during this period survived. It should also be noted that the "Transfiguration of Jesus" was changed to the last Sunday after the Epiphany. In many Western Churches it is still celebrated on August 6. The final note concerns the last Sundays in the Church Year. The Joint Commission intensified the eschatological thrust.⁹⁵

Since the middle 1960's, with the creation of the Inter-Lutheran Commission of Worship, a new pericopal system has come into use within many Lutheran churches in this country. There are some different liturgical elements used in this series. The more notable change is the use of a three year cycle. This gives a greater opportunity for proclaiming the "Whole Council of God", by involving more of the Scriptures. This is accomplished through the selections of three lections for the various services. The first lesson, "The lesson", now generally used, comes most often from the Old Testament Scriptures, and is meant to relate to the Gospel for the day. During the Easter cycle, these readings are taken from the Acts. The second lesson is the New Testament Lesson. Especially during the Semester Ecclesia, the basic pattern is a "lectio continua" of the Epistles. The Gospel Lesson in the system is handled in a slightly new, and refreshing way. While the traditional themes are observed, each year is based primarily on a single Gospel. Through the repetition of the total cycle, it is hoped that a better knowledge of the Gospels will follow. The focus of the year "A", is Matthew's Gospel; "B" deals with Mark' and "C" deals with Luke. Material from the Gospel of John is used in each of the years.⁹⁶

The I.L.C.W. people have worked to incorporate more joy and celebration into the services. This takes place in four types of celebration. The first type of celebration is the number of Principle Days. These are the basic festivals of the Church Year, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, Christmas Day and Epiphany. The second type of celebration is the "Sunday and Day of Special Devotion" type. Within this group would fall days such as Ash Wednesday and the Holy Week events. The third type involves the "Lesser Festivals". These are the days commemorating the Apostles and the Evangelists. The last type involves the numerous other "Commemorations." These days are meant to call to mind the lives of the saints from post-biblical times up to and including the present. In this group are various persons, who throughout history have been "the religious" or have been associated with various political resistance or humanitarian efforts. While they are meant to be models for present day man, the value of some is questionable. The overall focus, however, of all of the celebrations and the ultimate cause for joy is the Resurrection of Jesus the Christ, according to the Manual on the Liturgy.⁹⁷ This focus is generally maintained.

This next section has as its purpose a brief evaluation of the various pericopal systems in use at this time within Lutheran circles. The Gospels will be considered from the "Standard", one year cycle. From the contemporary I.L.C.W. (Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship), three year cycle, the Gospels from series "A" will be viewed.

The Festival Semester

(The Semester Domini)

Standard Series

I.L.C.W. Series A

The First Sunday in Advent

Matt. 21:1-9

The Triumphant Entry into
Jerusalem

or

Luke 3:1-6

John Begins His Ministry

Matt. 24:37-44

Be Ready, the Son of Man Will
Return Suddenly

or

Matt. 21:1-11

The Triumphant Entry Into Jerusalem

The Second Sunday in Advent

Luke 21:25

Signs in the Sun

Matt. 3:1-12

The Baptist Begins His Ministry

The Third Sunday in Advent

Matt. 11:2-10

John the Baptist's Question

Matt. 11:2-10

The same

The Fourth Sunday in Advent

John 1:19-28

John's Testimony

Matt. 1:18-25

The Vision to Joseph

The two systems have as their theme the coming of the Christ. The tone of the Standard Series is the coming of the judgment of God in Christ. The tone of the I.L.C.W. lessons begins with judgment but ends with words of hope that in the Child, God will be with His people.

The Nativity of Our Lord

I For Early Service

Luke 2:1-14

The Traditional Birth Narrative

Christmas 1

Luke 2:1-20

The same

It also includes

The Adoration of the Shepherds

The stress is the historical setting of Jesus' birth. The I.L.C.W.'s inclusion of the Shepherd's further points to the Christ's coming to all men, not just the Jewish elite.

II For the Later Service
John 1:1-14

Christmas 2
John 1:1-14

The stress is on the eternity of the Word become flesh.

III At Vespers
Cf. I for Early Service

Christmas 3
Cf. Christmas 1

The First Sunday After Christmas

Luke 2:33-40
The Blessing of Simeon

Matt. 2:13-15, 19-23
The Flight into Egypt

At this point the I.L.C.W. returns to the older usage. The event of the Blessing of Simeon is used at Jesus' Presentation at the Temple, and celebrated on February 2. The Flight, while coming after the Epiphany is noted here, however.

The Circumcision and the Name of Jesus

Luke 2:21

Luke 2:21

The focus is on the historical event of Jesus properly becoming a son of the Covenant. It is celebrated on January 1.

The Second Sunday after Christmas

John 1:14-18

John 1:1-18

The primary thrust of both is the purpose of the Eternal Word become flesh, to reveal the Father.

The Epiphany of Our Lord

(January 6)

Matt. 2:1-12

Matt. 2:1-12

The Adoration of Christ by the Magi is the first revelation of the Christ. The thrust is His universal nature or scope of His work

The First Sunday after the Epiphany

Luke 2:41-52

Jesus in the Temple (age 12)

The Baptism of our Lord

Matt. 3:13-17

Jesus Fulfills All Righteousness

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

John 2:1-11

The Wedding at Cana in Galilee

John 1:29-41

Jesus the Lamb of God

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Matt. 8:1-13

Jesus Heals a Leper and the Centurion's Daughter

Matt. 4:12-23

John's Arrest and the Beginning of Jesus Ministry

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Matt. 8:23-27

Jesus Reveals His Power Over Nature

Matt. 5:1-12

The Beatitudes

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Matt. 13:24-30

The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

Matt. 5:13-20

Continuation of the Sermon on the Mount. "You are Salt."

The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

Matt. 17:1-9

The Transfiguration

Matt. 5:20-37

Sermon on the Mount (Cont.)
Intensification of the LawSeptuagesima Sunday

Matt. 20:1-16

The Laborers in the Vineyard

Matt. 5:38-48

Sermon on the Mount (Cont.)
Love Your EnemiesThe Seventh Sunday after EpiphanySexagesima Sunday

Luke 8:4-15

Parable of the Sower

Matt. 6:24-34

Sermon on the Mount (cont.)
No One Can Serve Two MastersThe Eighth Sunday after EpiphanyQuinquagesima Sunday

Luke 18:31-43

Final Trip Toward Jerusalem
The Healing of the Blind Man

Matt. 17:1-9

The Transfiguration

The Last Sunday after the Epiphany

The general theme which is observed in both sets is the revelation of Christ. In the Standard Series Jesus' wisdom and power is revealed during the Epiphany Season proper. During the Pre-Lent Season some aspects of the Kingdom of God are revealed by the Christ. The I.L.C.W. series in a historical way shows how Jesus was revealed at His Baptism, and by the Baptizer. Also revealed is the nature of discipleship. This is through a "lectio continua" style reading of the early chapters of Matthew's Gospel.

Both sets finish the season proper with the event of the Transfiguration.

Ash Wednesday

Matt. 6:16-21 Lay Up Treasures in Heaven		Matt. 6:1-6, 16-21 the Same
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Both series begin Lent by calling man to a life of true piety.

The First Sunday in Lent

Invocabit Matt. 4:1-11 The Temptation of Jesus		Matt. 4:1-11 The Same
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The Second Sunday in Lent

Reminiscere Matt. 15:21-28 Healing of the Canaanite Woman's Daughter		John 4:5-26 (27-30, 39-42) The Samaritan Woman, and True Worship
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The Third Sunday in Lent

Oculi Luke 11:14-28 The Dumb-devil Is Cast Out		John 9:13-17, 34-39 The Healing of the Man Born Blind, and Rebuke of Jewish Disbelief
--	--	---

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Laetare John 6:1-15 The Feeding of the Five Thousand		Matt. 20:17-28 Whoever Would Be Great Must be Your Servant
--	--	--

The Fifth Sunday in Lent

Judica/Passion Sunday

John 8:46-59

Jesus Colloquy with Accusers
"Before Abraham was, I am!"

John 11:1-53 (esp. 11:41-53)

The Raising of Lazarus and the
Plot to Kill HimThe Sixth Sunday in Lent (Beginning of Holy Week)

Palmarum

Matt. 21:1-11

The Triumphant Entry

or

Matt. 26:1-27:66

The Passion

Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday

Matt. 21:1-11

the same

or

Matt. 26:1-27:66 (esp. 27:11-54)

The Same

Monday John 12:1-36

John 12:1-11

Tuesday John 12:37-50

John 12:20-36

or Mark 14:1-15:46

Wednesday Luke 22:1-23:53

Matt. 26:14-25

(Both deal with various events in the "Great Week")

Maunday Thursday

John 13:1-15

The New Commandment

or

John 6:28-37

The Living Bread

John 13:1-15

The same

Good Friday

John 18:1-19:42

Olivet to the Garden Tomb

John 18:1-19:42 (esp. 19:17-30)

The Same

Easter Eve

Matt. 27:57-66

The Garden Tomb

(In the place of a specific Lesson,
the I.L.C.W. suggests the order for
an Easter Vigil. This is a return
to the pattern of the Early Church

Both series during Lent call people to a deeper commitment to the Faith.

The Standard series, however, in tone reveals the Savior as the Powerful Lord,

as the One capable of overcoming sin and of caring for the needs of people. While Jesus' power is revealed in Lent V, in the I.L.C.W., the emphasis is more a judgment upon sin.

Beginning with the Sunday of Holy Week, however, both systems recall the various events of Holy Week in an historical manner.

The Resurrection of Our Lord

Easter Day

I For an Early Service

John 20:1-18

The Empty Tomb and The Appearing
to Mary Magdalene

John 20:1-9 (10-18)

The same

II For The Service

Mark 16:1-7

The Empty Tomb

III At Vespers

Luke 24:13-35

The Road to Emmaus

(or Easter Monday)

Easter Evening

Luke 24:13-49

The same, also

Jesus Appearing to the Disciples

The Sunday after Easter

Quasi Modo Geniti

John 21:19-31

Jesus in Their Midst

The Second Sunday of Easter

John 20:19-31

The Same

The Second Sunday after Easter

Misericordia Domini

John 10:11-16

The Good Shepherd

The Third Sunday of Easter

Luke 24:13-35

The Emmaus Road

The Third Sunday after Easter

Jubilate

John 16:16-22

A Little While

The Fourth Sunday of Easter

John 10:1-10

The Door of the Sheep

The Fourth Sunday after Easter

Cantate

John 16:4-15

I Go To My Father

The Fifth Sunday of Easter

John 14:1-12

I Am the Way

The Fifth Sunday After Easter

Rogate

John 16:23-30

Whatever You Ask

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

John 14:15-21

I Will Not Leave You Desolate

The Ascension

Mark 16:14-20

The Commission, and The Ascension

Luke' 24:44-53

The Promise of the Spirit, and
The AscensionThe Sunday after Ascension

Exaudi

John 15:26-16:4

The Comforter Is Come

The Seventh Sunday of Easter

John 17:1-11

Glorify Them. Jesus No Longer in
the World

The Standard Series begins this season naturally with the Easter event and lists through the Sundays some characteristics of the Risen Lord. The I.L.C.W. seeks to establish the Easter and the Post-Easter Sundays as a unitive, and festive celebration until Pentecost. Both of the cycles beginning with the Sunday before the Ascension proclaim words of promise given by the Savior, and continue with the promise of the coming Comforter, Who on Pentecost was poured out upon the Church.

The Pentecost

Whitsunday

John 14:23-31

Keep My Commandments

John 20:19-23

Receive the Spirit

This last event in the Festival Semester is a springboard for the remaining half of the Church Year. The Standard Series charges the church to "keep my commandments". The I.L.C.W. finishes the Festival Semester with the giving of the Spirit to the disciples, which is the Key to the Christian's being able to respond to God's grace.

The Second Semester of the Church Year

(The Semester Ecclesia)

Trinity Sunday

Matt. 28:18-20
The Great Commission

of

John 3:1-15
You Must Be Born Again

The Sunday After Trinity

Luke 16:19-31
The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man

The Second Sunday After Trinity

Luke 14:15-24
The Parable of the Supper

The Third Sunday after Trinity

Luke 15:1-10
The Lost Sheep

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Luke 6:36-42
Be Merciful

The Fifth Sunday After Trinity

Luke 5:1-11
Fishers of Men

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 5:20-26
Except Your Righteousness Exceed

The Sunday after Pentecost

Trinity Sunday
Matt. 28:16-20
The same

The Second Sunday After Pentecost

Matt. 7:(15-20)21-29
Everyone Who Hears and Does These Words Is Wise

The Third Sunday After Pentecost

Matt. 9:9-13
Follow Me, I Desire Mercy, not Sacrifice

The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 9:35-10:8
The People Are Lost Sheep and Pray For Laborers

The Fifth Sunday After Pentecost

Matt. 10:24-33
Everyone Who Acknowledges Me

The Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

Matt. 10:34-42
I Bring A Sword

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 11:25-30
All Things Have Been Delivered To Me, Take My Yoke

The Seventh Sunday After Trinity

Mark 8:1-9
The Feeding of the Multitude

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 7:15-21
False Prophets

The Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Luke 6:1-9
The Parable of the Steward

or

Luke 15:11-32
The Prodigal Son

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Luke 19:41-47a
Jesus Wept Over Jerusalem

The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

Luke 18:9-14
The Pharisee and the Publican

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Mark 7:31-37
Healing of the Deaf-Mute

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

Luke 10:23-37
The Parable of the Good Samaritan

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

Luke 17:11-19
Ten Lepers Cleansed

The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 13:1-9 (18-23)
The Parable of the Sower

The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 13:24-30 (36-43)
The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 13:44-52
Parables of the Kingdom

The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 14:13-21
The Feeding of the Five Thousand

The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 14:22-33
Jesus Walks On Water, The Disciples Worship Him

The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 15:21-28
Healing of the Canaanite Woman's Daughter

The Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Matt. 16:13-20
Peter's Confession

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 16:21-26
Take Up Your Cross

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 6:24-34
You Cannot Serve Two Masters

The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

Luke 7:11-16
The Widow's Son Restored to Life

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

Luke 14:1-11
Jesus Teaches Humility

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 22:34-46
Love, the Great Commandment

The Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity

Matt. 9:1-8
Jesus Forgives and Heals the Paralytic

The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 22:1-14
The Parable of the Wedding Feast

The Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity

John 4:46b-53
Jesus Heals the Nobleman's Son

The Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 18:21-35
The Parable of the Wicked Servant

The Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 22:15-21
Render to Caesar and God What Is Theirs

The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 18:15-20
Christian Admonition
The Office of the Keys

The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 18:21-35
The Parable of the Wicked Servant

The Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Matt. 20:1-16
Parable of the Householder and Workmen

The nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 21:28-32
The Parable of the Two Sons

The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 21:33-43
The Parable of the Vineyard and the Evil Tenants

The Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 22:1-14
The same

The Twenty-Second Sunday After Pentecost

Matt. 22:15-21
Render to Caesar and God What Is Theirs

The Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 22:34-40 (41-46)
Love, the Great Commandment

The Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 25:1-13
Parable of the Ten Virgins

The Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 9:15-26
The Daughter of Jairus

The Twenty-Fifth Sunday After Trinity

Matt. 24:15-28
The Abomination of Desolation

The Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Trinity (Christ the King)

Matt. 25:31-46
When the Son of Man Shall Come

The Last Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 25:1-13
The Parable of the Ten Virgins

The Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 25:14-30
The Parable of the Talents

The Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 23:1-12
Jesus Teaches About Humility

The Twenty-Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Matt. 24:1-14
Jesus foretells about the End

The Last Sunday after Pentecost Christ the King Sunday

Matt. 25:31-46
When the Son of Man Shall Come

This section of the Church Year is the "cycle of teachings" about God's Kingdom on earth. The overall theme that shows itself is: Man responding to God through commitment. A breakdown of this in terms of the kingdom may be clearly seen in the Standard Series. Using the later Post-Trinity numbering system, Sundays I - V deal with the call to the kingdom. Sundays VI-XI deal with the righteousness of the kingdom. Sundays XII - XVIII proclaim the newlife of righteousness, while the rest move to the consummation of the kingdom. The I.L.C.W. cycle treats generally these same themes. Its ordering, however, is not topical. Based on the "lectio continua" style it moves through Matthew's Gospel climaxing in the Second Coming on Christ the King Sunday.

Conclusion

While the Church Year and the Pericopal Systems are not inspired, they are meant to be inspiring. With their methodical progression they

indeed instruct the church. They call to mind the life-giving Savior, His work and gifts to man. ^{I+}~~He~~ also becomes a source of direction for the Christian in his daily life. Without such a system or progression the Church would long ago have become topical and without balance. With the Church Year and Pericopal Systems as tools, the church will continue to proclaim in a balanced way "The Whole Counc~~il~~ of God."

To that end, May God Alone Receive
the Glory.

End Notes

1. Luther D. Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947), p. 229.
2. Reed, p. 10.
3. Frederick G. Gotwald, The Value of the Church Year (The Board of Education of the United Lutheran Church in America, n.p., n.d.), pp. 9-12.
4. Walker Gwynne, The Church Year: Its Purpose and Its Value (New York: Longman's Green and Company, 1917; reprint ed., Detroit: Grand River Books, 1971), p. 2.
5. Lucien Deiss, C. S. Sp., God's Word and God's People, Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1976), p. 106.
6. Gwynne, p. 15.
7. Ibid., p. 17.
8. Henry Snyder Gehman, The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), p. 1008.
9. Gwynne, p. 17.
10. Gibson, p. 46.
11. Ibid., p. 47.
12. Gwynne, p. 18.
13. Gibson, p. 43.
14. Deiss, p. 99.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 97.
17. Ibid., p. 101.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 103.
20. Ibid., p. 112.
21. Ibid., p. 143.
22. Gwynne, p. 11.

23. Ibid., p. 28.
24. Gibson, p. 79.
25. Ibid., p. 89.
26. Ibid., p. 68.
27. Gwynne, p. 27.
28. Gibson, p. 70.
29. Alexander Allan McArthur, The Evolution of The Christian Year (Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, 1953), pp. 13, 14.
30. Gwynne, p. 33.
31. Ibid., pp. 51,52.
32. Gibson, pp. 71,72.
33. McArthur, pp. 27,28.
34. Gibson, p. 80.
35. Ibid., pp. 79 ff.
36. McArthur, p. 112.
37. Gwynne, pp. 64, 65
38. McArthur, p. 79; p. 87; p. 89.
39. Gibson, p. 92.
40. McArthur, p. 108.
41. Gwynne, pp. 110ff.
42. Gotwald, p. 6.
43. McArthur, p. 129.
44. Ibid., pp. 116-7.
45. Ibid., p. 114.
46. Ibid., pp. 122, 123.
47. Ibid., pp. 123,124.

48. Ibid., pp. 132,133.
49. Gibson, p. 91.
50. Ibid., p. 92.
51. Ibid., p. 93.
52. McArthur, p. 137.
53. Ibid., p. 151.
54. Ibid., p. 159.
55. Gibson, pp. 42ff.
56. Gwynne, pp. 70,71.
57. Gibson, p. 84.
58. McArthur, p. 148.
59. Ibid., pp. 156, 157.
60. Ibid., p. 155.
61. Ibid.
62. Gwynne, p. 72.
63. Gibson, p. 83.
64. Ibid., pp. 94,95.
65. Gwynne, p. 56.
66. McArthur, p. 67.
67. Gotwald, p. 4.
68. McArthur, p. 39.
69. Gibson, p. 69; Gwynne, p. 57.
70. Gibson, p. 88.
71. Ibid., p. 96.
72. Gwynne, pp. 58,61.
73. Gibson, p. 95.
74. McArthur, p. 70.

75. Gibson, p. 95.
76. Gwynne, p. 79.
77. Gibson, p. 115.
78. Ibid., p. 117.
79. Gibson, pp. 125,126.
80. Reed, p. 291.
81. Ibid., p. 224.
82. Ibid., p. 288.
83. Ibid., p. 47.
84. Ibid., p. 289.
85. Ibid., p. 453.
86. Ibid., p. 42.
87. Ibid., p. 455.
88. Ibid., pp. 457,458.
89. Ibid., p. 458.
90. Ibid., p. 459.
91. Ibid., p. 289.
92. Ibid., p. 290.
93. Ibid., p. 454.
94. Ibid., p. 246; p. 294; p. 298.
95. Ibid., p. 290.
96. Philip H. Pfatteicher and Carlos R. Meiserli, The Manual on the Liturgy--
Lutheran Book of Worship (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House,
1979), p. 31.
97. Ibid., p. 21.

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