

4-1-1956

## Theology, News and Notes - Vol. 03, No. 03

Fuller Theological Seminary

William Sanford LaSor

Gleason L. Archer Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/tnn>

 Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Fuller Theological Seminary; LaSor, William Sanford; and Archer, Gleason L. Jr., "Theology, News and Notes - Vol. 03, No. 03" (1956). *Theology News & Notes*. 5.  
<https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/tnn/5>

This Periodical is brought to you for free and open access by the Fuller Seminary Publications at Digital Commons @ Fuller. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theology News & Notes by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Fuller. For more information, please contact [archives@fuller.edu](mailto:archives@fuller.edu).

THEOLOGY NEWS & NOTES  
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
PASADENA 1, CALIFORNIA

William Sanford LaSor, Editor

VOLUME 3

April 1956

NUMBER 3

(Opinions expressed in this letter are those of the editor or guest editors, and are not the official views of the Seminary.)

Dear Alumni and Friends of Fuller Seminary:

If there are any of you who watch for the third of the month to bring you the latest TN&N, you are no doubt chomping on your fingernails, wondering where the mailman put it this time, or what happened to LaSor, or--no, you wouldn't think that, would you? No, not really! Well, I was hoping you would never think that!

My main difficulty is the calendar. I understand the UN is planning to give us a calendar, every quarter of which has 91 days, and every month the same pattern, year by year. Now my difficulty is that I need quarters of about 97 days, and 31 days in every--no, that only makes 93. Well, anyway, I just ran out of time.

But I did get my dissertation in under the wire. And just now I am trying to get the final typing in under the wire. And I am trying to get a manuscript on the Dead Sea Scrolls in under the wire. And a manuscript on A Bibliography of the Dead Sea Scrolls in under the wire. And if I get much else under the wire, the old wire is going to be so far up in the air, I will not even be able to tell whether I am under it.

What's all this wire-stuffing about, anyway? Well, I go on my sabbatical at the end of this term, and I am trying to clean up all the odds-and-ends that have accumulated through enthusiastically taking on too much, being too soft-hearted to say "No" more often, and just plain lack of organization. Anyway, I want you to know that I have time in an overcrowded schedule to write you and let you know that I am thinking of you. Your letters are deeply appreciated, even if most of them have gone unanswered this time. And I hope to see some of you while I am traveling about, next summer and fall.

#### SABBATICAL PLANS

In the last issue, I tacked on a PS mentioning my Honorary Lectureship at the Jerusalem School of ASOR. Since then, things have moved apace, and I have what I think are some very interesting plans. Some of you may be interested in them, and some of you have been praying for things to open up for my sabbatical, so I thought I would share the facts with you.

For a vacation, we (I am taking 5/6 of the family with me) are going to see some of northwest Europe, and I am hoping to visit a number of the universities having Faculties of Theology, particularly in Old Testament, or Departments of Semitic Studies, in Scandinavia, the Low Countries, Germany, and anywhere else I can get. That will be June and the first part of July. We will pick up a small car in Germany and tour. Following that, I expect to attend the University of Vienna for the summer school. The last week in August, I



plan to attend the Congress of the International Organization of Old Testament Scholars at Strashourg. It is an honor, I think, to be one of four American scholars scheduled to read a paper to the Organization. My paper will be on, "The Tendency to Resist Phonetically Homogeneous Phonemes in the First Two Radicals of Semitic Roots." I told someone that, a couple of weeks ago, and he said, "What does that mean?" Well, if you really want to know, plan to come to Strashourg the week of 27 August.

After that, we plan to drive through Jugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon, to Beirut. It has long been an ambition of mine to cover the Pauline country. We dreamed about it in 1952, when we did the photographic tour of the Bible lands, but could not squeeze it in. There have been very few works that have covered Asia Minor for Biblical studies. In the back of my mind was the project of a Historical Geography of Bible Lands. The whole project seemed almost too fantastic to plan. Then all at once, last week, I saw the working out of the details in a manner that makes us think that the days of miracles are not over.

It came about through an incidental remark made in passing to one of our special students, about Turkey and the Turkish language. It turned out that he planned to be in Turkey at about the same time I would be there, if I completed the projected idea. We will have an extra seat in the car by then, since our daughter--the one they refer to when perfect strangers meet me and say, "Oh, you're Betsy's father!"--has to return for school. My knowledge of Turkish amounts to towels and baths. But our fellow tourist speaks both Turkish and Armenian as mother tongues, not to mention Arabic, French, and English. So he will do the asking, and I will do the photographing, and between us we hope to know Paul's country, in Greece and Asia Minor, far better than we know it now. And after that, I hope to make it available to you in a form that will be useful and interesting as well as authentic. In fact, I even have a publisher who has agreed to take the manuscript. He really has faith!

October and as much of November as time allows, I expect to be in the Jerusalem area, partly for geography and partly for Dead Sea Scrolls research. Having written a dissertation that goes over 500 pages with Bibliography, I feel the need of doing some research on the subject! Seriously, though, the importance of this subject only begins to clarify after a tremendous amount of study; and I expect to devote a good share of my remaining scholarly days to the implications of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

#### FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

Recently I have had a couple of requests that we keep the readers of TN&N informed about publications of the Faculty of FTS. This idea sounds fine to me. We have not said much about faculty publications in the past because we did not want this to sound like a propaganda sheet. We are simply trying to be helpful in every way possible. But if you feel it would help you to know what the faculty is publishing, the space is here for the asking. I shall need the cooperation of my colleagues, too, for I do not always know what they are publishing. They write in English, you know--and it takes a lot of my time to try to figure out what the Hebrew (or Syriac, or whatever tomorrow's lesson happens to be) actually says. My students are always trying to confuse me. At any rate, speak up. It's your paper.

One of the forthcoming publications that I happen to know about is Professor



Ladd's latest. If I have the title correct, it is The Blessed Hope, George E. Ladd, and will be Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. It should be on the shelves before this notice gets to you. \* \* \* I have heard by the scuttlebutt (grapevine, to you landlubbers) that Professor Henry expects to have his manuscript on Christian Ethics cast in type before long. It will probably be a while before that work gets into the bookstores, however, since it is rather lengthy, and there is a lot of work involved in proofreading, etc., still ahead. \* \* \* President Carnell has a chapter, "Niebuhr's Criteria of Verification" in Kegley & Bretall's Reinhold Niebuhr, His Religious, Social, and Political Thought, Vol. II in The Library of Living Theology (Macmillan, 1956). \* \* \* Dean Lindsell has a book of daily devotions about to appear. I am not sure whether I mentioned his book on missions in a previous issue, but just in case, here's the reference: Harold Lindsell, Missionary Principles and Practice (New York: Revell, 1955). \* \* \* My translation of René Pache, The Return of Jesus Christ came out last fall (Chicago: Moody Press, 1955). \* \* \* Keep your eyes open, too, for my The Dead Sea Scrolls and Their Significance for Biblical Studies (title subject to revision), which should be out next fall (Chicago: Moody Press, 1956?).

Now, as soon as I get some system worked out whereby TN&N gets review copies of works by the faculty, and another system of reviewers, I hope to get this department on a sounder basis. At present it's only sound. Incidentally, I heard about a scholar who reviewed his own book for a certain journal, stating that he did so because no one else knew as much about his book as he did. Maybe we should review our own books. They would never get a more favorable review anywhere else!

I asked my colleague, Professor Archer, to write a guest article. When I did so, I realized that it might seem as though I was trying to pack some extra Old Testament propaganda in TN&N. He surprised me, though, by giving me the manuscript for the following--which belongs in the department of Practical Theology, I think (with some subtle overtones of Hebrew exegesis). At any rate, in order to even up the balances, I shall try to refrain from speaking on the Old Testament in this issue, and yield the floor gladly to Professor Archer.

#### TRANSLATION AS THE PREACHER'S RESPONSIBILITY--by Gleason L. Archer, Jr.

In a very real sense the most important function of a minister of the Gospel is found in the work of translation. He has before him a written revelation from God, the Holy Scripture. It is his task to explain to his people what that revelation means; that is, what God meant by it and means by it today. This goes far beyond the usual procedure of personally reacting to the words of the scriptural passage and coming forth with ideas which are suggested by the phraseology of whatever translation into English the preacher uses for his sermon preparation. The product of that kind of preparation is apt to be a mixture of the Word of God and the word of man, corrupted and confused by many misunderstandings and superficialities. As God gave His Word it was and is full of depth and richness, to attain which is worth the expenditure of the greatest efforts.

There is a kind of Scripture exposition which is highly questionable and all too often barren of good fruit, which contents itself with minimal objectives. Ever since some preacher thought up the dubious etymology of "sincere" as meaning "without wax," (a questionable etymology even from the standpoint of



Latin), congregations have been told that that is what the Bible means when it calls for sincerity in Christians. Even granting that sincērus could mean "without wax," is not the real question at issue what is the significance of the Greek word eilikrinēs, which "sincere" is supposed to be translating? Or, to take another example, it is all very well to point out that the etymology of the English word "atone" means "at one," and that atonement amounts to "at-one-ment," so that the sinner becomes at one with God. But this is somewhat misleading and beside the point unless it can be shown that the Hebrew kippēr happens to mean the same thing. As a matter of fact, kippēr does not have that root significance at all, but rather that of "covering over," even as the blood of Jesus covers over the sins of His people. A wonderful new world opens up for the minister who rediscovers his Hebrew Bible and who takes the trouble to dust off those unused volumes of Kittel and Brown-Driver-Briggs, which have remained so long untouched on his study shelf. When he comes with a loving, questing spirit in search of the true and deeper meaning of the passage from which he hopes to teach or preach, the Lord has a special blessing in store for him that will make every extra expenditure of time worth while. Nor will his conscience ever have to rise in accusation that he has not been entirely faithful in his stewardship of the training he received at seminary.

One of the most rewarding books of the Old Testament in which to make a beginning is the Psalter. As soon as we open to the 1st Psalm, we find ourselves confronted by several key terms of cardinal significance throughout the Old Testament revelation, terms which cannot be accurately studied except in the original inasmuch as they appear under a variety of different guises in English translation. Thus in verse 1, the word reshā'īm is translated "ungodly," whereas in Isaiah 57:20, the same word is translated the "wicked." Only through the Hebrew is it possible to make a study of reshā'īm upon a sound and reliable basis and find out what cluster of connotations attached itself to the term in the mind of the Hebrew reader. A study of the etymology of reshā'īm indicates that it means "to be morally out of joint," since the cognate in Arabic means "to be disjointed or ill regulated." Many depths of sermonic insight are to be gleaned from what the Scripture says of unbelievers under this aspect, for their soul is out of joint, and as Isaiah 57:20 and 21 tells us, they are devoid of peace and are like the ceaselessly tossing waters of the sea.

Next we meet with the term "sinners," ḥaṭṭā'īm, those who miss the mark or who fail of the goal of life, coming from ḥaṭṭā', a verb used of a slinger who misses his mark.

And lastly, we have the enemies of the faith described as the scornful, lēsīm, coming from lūṣ, which means "to deride" or "to scoff." Biblical usage shows that this word is applied to the cynic who derides every effort of the godly to live for the Lord and who seeks to explain their pious conduct and their God-honoring decisions on the basis of concealed motives of self-seeking.

These then are some of the types of adversary the servant of the Lord must face as he seeks to maintain a pure testimony for God. Blessed is the man who has not walked or stood or sat with such as they. Note that the tense of the three verbs in this first verse is perfect, not imperfect as one might gather from the translation. How can the believer escape from the downward pull of earthly-minded wordlings? By communion with God through His holy Word. It is important to remember that tōrah, spoken of in verse 2, means something far more than a legal regulation. As a noun derived from the hiphil of yārah, it signifies "instruction" and as such can apply to the godly father, in the book of Proverbs, who



seeks to instruct his son in the way of life and therefore urges him to pay heed to his own tôrah, that is, his fatherly instruction. When used of God, tôrah always has revelational significance. God has revealed His will for our salvation and holy living through His chosen instrument, Moses, and the other human authors of the Old Testament, and we are answerable to Him as the source of that instruction. Tôrah here is tantamount to "Bible."

What use is the believer to make of this revelation from God? He is to delight in it; hēpheṣ indicates that in which we have lively, zealous interest, that which is our chief concern or major goal, towards which we press with enthusiasm. Thus are we to treat God's written revelation and to meditate in it at least twice daily. For the Psalmist says "by day and by night." When the servant of God makes this use of the Scripture, his soul is strengthened. It grows and develops as it should, and becomes fruitbearing without the blight of failure and spiritual depression. That soul in verse 3 is compared to a tree transplanted beside channels of water. Shāthūl implies "transplanting" or "grafting" rather than "planting" in the sense of dropping a seed in a new place. And the "rivers" are probably to be understood as "irrigation canals," since the verb pālag implies "to cleave," "to divide," "to cut a channel through." The Lord has made special provision for irrigating the trees of His orchard, that they may not dry up during the summer drought. Those who are thus nourished in spirit enjoy consistent prosperity and success. Hiṣlīah comes from a root meaning "to be in good condition," "to be in a state of soundness." The hiphil implies "to experience that soundness of condition," "to show prosperity." In verse 4 the reshā'im are said to be like chaff which the wind scatters. Observe that the word for "wind" is rūah, which is also the word for "spirit." This observation makes it possible for the preacher to see immediately a connection with passages like Psalm 103:16, where likewise the wind is used as an instrument of God's judgment in carrying away to oblivion that which is transient and worthless. So also Isaiah 40:7: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit (rūah) of the Lord bloweth upon it. Surely the people is grass." These passages emphasize the vanity of any life which is not based upon a complete submission to the will of God and a walking with Him upon the basis of His Covenant of grace.

The word "judgment," mishpāt, in verse 5 occurs with great frequency in the Hebrew Scriptures and is used in several different senses. Here, of course, it is judgment in the sense of a court in judicial session, in which God administers and applies His own holy law to the individual sinners who come before Him at the Final Day. Those who have kept themselves outside of the Covenant so far as their heart response is concerned will have no portion with the "righteous," the ṣaddīqīm, that is, with those who have conformed to God's holy standard. It is important to ascertain from a careful study of ṣaddīq that it signifies not one who has been found sinlessly perfect, but rather, ōne who has honestly believed God, taken Him at His word, rested upon His promise, and has submitted his heart to His authority that he might walk in fellowship with Him. A study of the use of this important word from the time of the patriarchs on through the subsequent record in the Old Testament gives to us this deeper and more adequate understanding of the term "righteous."

It is, of course, true that in the New Testament the doctrine of justification by faith is made even more explicit in its bearing upon the way in which the Holy Spirit meant the term righteous to be understood. According to God's definition, the righteous man is he who has been justified. Or, in New Testament terminology, the dikaios is he edikaiōthē. Yet one may find a very striking adumbration of this principle in such Old Testament passages as Isaiah 53:11, where we read,



"By the knowledge of Him [that is, of the servant of Jehovah] a righteous one [ṣaddīq]. My servant, shall make righteous, or impart righteousness [yaṣdīq], unto the many, for their iniquities He Himself shall bear." Thus it will be seen that a careful comparison of scripture with scripture will serve to bring out with edifying clarity what the Holy Spirit implies by such significant terms as these, which are so susceptible to misunderstanding when approached simply through the avenue of English translation.

Note that in the 6th verse of this Psalm, the present paraphrastic is used, that is, the verb form is a participle, yōdēa', implying linear action. Jehovah constantly knows, takes knowledge of, acknowledges, the way of the righteous. In the case of the ungodly, however, the way which they have chosen to tread upon (and note that derekh comes from dārakh, "to tread upon") goes astray or becomes lost (tō'bēd), that being the basic idea of 'ābhad; the meaning "perish" is a secondary usage, derived from the loss and final disappearance of that which goes astray from the right path, ending up where it does not intend or wish to go. So it is with the ungodly sinner who chooses what he thinks is the path to happiness and success, but which leads to that outer darkness in which he is eternally lost and away from home.

Very fittingly this first Psalm is an introduction to the entire collection, serving as a proem to the Psalter from its ethical character, whereas the following Psalm, Psalm 2, provides an introduction from the standpoint of its prophetic character. In your study of Psalm 2, therefore, examine carefully all of the usages which Brown-Driver-Briggs lists for each of the key terms, and look up some of those scriptures which he cites. It will throw a flood of light upon your understanding of the spiritual forces arrayed against each other, the heathen in the one camp, the Lord and His Messiah in the other. This kind of study takes time, but in the end it is well worth all the labor. Your congregation has a right to expect it of you. Be a good pastor and feed them with the Word of God as God gave His Word.

#### BOOKS - (WSLS)

Grab the paychecks, girls. Here comes that man with the books, again! And who wants to buy books, when it is time to think about vacations, and new tires, and baby bottles, and all those other things? FOR MEN ONLY. (Now, listen, fellows, here's what I tell my wife. "After all, suppose I was a ditch digger--I'd have to have a new shovel now and then. And if you had married a doctor, I'd be going out every now and then and spending two or three hundred dollars for a fancy pair of scissors to perform a whatsitectomy. Even if I was a violinist, I'd have to have a new string, now and then. You wouldn't deprive me of just one book, would you? After all, it's part of my tools-of-trade!" Trouble is, it only works once a year. O.K., GIRLS, YOU CAN COME IN AGAIN.

I came across a couple of pretty good books by W. H. Griffith Thomas. The first, St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, r. 1953), is a reprint that deserves to be in print. I don't always agree with Thomas--which is a right I insist must be preserved if we are to be true Protestants--but I usually do. The commentary is devotional, yet not frothy. I have been making good use of it in connection with my Sunday School class at Glendale. \* \* \* The second, The Holy Spirit of God (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 3d ed. 1955) is the Stone Lectures at Princeton Seminary for 1913. The Holy Spirit has been a favorite subject of mine for twenty years. I have looked for good books on the subject, and have usually been disappointed. But I have not been disappointed with Griffith Thomas.



I am sure you will enjoy this volume. \* \* \* Baker Book House has reprinted several titles among which are the following. David Thomas, Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955 [1870]), organized so you can get sermon outlines from the text. I hope you will not let it stifle your own thinking; it can be a help to you, if you use it properly. \* \* \* Robert Johnstone, The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955 [1875]). There is considerable material here for practical preaching that is expository in character. And in my opinion, the only preaching worth hearing regularly is expository. The overwhelming ignorance of the Bible in America today can be laid squarely at the doors of churches where the Bible is not taught. Incidentally, this is not a Liberal-Conservative problem, for I have heard plenty of Conservatives spend their time berating some person or thing, setting forth some pet theory, or doing anything else but expound the Word of God. \* \* \* Best of the reprints, this time, is Alfred Edersheim, Prophecy and History (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955 [1901; although the lectures were given in 1880-84]). Of course, there is a lot that is out of date. But there is still a stimulating approach that will be useful. Be sure you bring the facts up to date with a modern volume, before you quote!

Once in a while, sink your teeth into some real meaty reading. It will keep your preaching from becoming vapid--provided, of course, you let the solid stuff digest before you try to preach it. I recommend that you try John Murray, Redemption Accomplished and Applied (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955.) You may have read some of these chapters in The Presbyterian Guardian; the rest is new. Here is exegesis, and here is Calvinism--both in the best sense. If you do not believe in the idea of "limited atonement," you at least owe it to yourself to see how someone else understands the doctrine. And you will at least realize the basic necessity for the atonement--which is, after all, the reason for our preaching.

#### POPES CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT - WSLS

Recently an article in Catholic Biblical Quarterly (18:23ff.) started with the words, "What attitude must the Catholic scholar today take toward the Decrees of the Pontifical Biblical Commission? Is he still, in the words of St. Pius X, 'bound in conscience to submit to the decisions' so that he cannot 'escape the stigma both of disobedience and temerity nor be free from grave guilt' if he 'impugns these decisions either in word or writing? Or, since the decisions are not infallible and hence are revocable, as all Catholic theologians teach, may he trust the indications that the decisions have been tacitly revoked?" The problem raised by this compound question was clarified last year by the Biblical Commission, but its statement has not yet been published in official publications, and CBQ was setting forth the principles.

What interested me in particular was the following: "In his reply to Cardinal Suhard, January 16, 1948, Very Rev. James M. Vosté, O.P., then Secretary of the Biblical Commission, quotes [a] section of the Encyclical as an argument that the decrees of the Commission regarding the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and the interpretation of Gn 1-3 were not intended to exclude further study of the problems: 'If one would rightly understand and interpret in the light of this recommendation of the Sovereign Pontiff the...official answers previously given by the Biblical Commission..., one will readily grant that these answers are in no way opposed to further and truly scientific examination of these problems in accordance with the results obtained during these last forty years. Consequently, the Biblical Commission believes that there is no need, at least



for the moment, to promulgate any new decrees regarding these questions'" (p. 24).

Now, it isn't so many centuries ago that the Protestant Reformation occurred. And it seems to me that one of the issues was the right of private interpretation of the scriptures over against church dogma. In fact, I seem to remember hearing myself speak, on occasion, of the importance of safeguarding this right in Protestantism, if we are to preserve one of our necessary foundations.

In matters of Church History I may be wrong, and if so, I shall hear from some of you,--but wasn't it the Baptists who were so strongly opposed to dogmatic authoritarianism, as over against private interpretation of the Scriptures, that they repeatedly resisted the tendency to formulate creeds and confessions? It seems that it was a Baptist Director of Religious Education in one of my churches who once chided me because of our insistence upon the Westminster Confession of Faith. Only the Bible, privately interpreted, should be our rule of faith!

Today, in conservative Protestant circles, if someone were to suggest that the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, or the interpretation of the first three chapters of Genesis, could be freely opened up for restudy, I can imagine that a number of Protestant popes would at once object. These are closed questions! Orthodoxy has spoken: let all dogs be silent!

No--I am not rejecting Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. I see no good reason to reject it. There is no longer any historical objection such as Wellhausen raised to the literary composition at such an early date. Linguistic evidence from Ras Shamra and elsewhere tends to support the early date of the Pentateuch in certain points, precisely where it was formerly held that an early date was impossible. Psychologically, it would have taken a gigantesque figure to have accomplished a work such as the Torah has been for hundreds of decades--and who is there like Moses for this place of influence? And I am not rejecting the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis. Something like that had to happen to account for the race, its origin, and its present condition. What is there better than the story found in Genesis? No, I accept these points.

My objection is voiced against the refusal on the part of some Protestants to let each generation study these questions anew.

The Catholic Church says that it is perfectly all right for reverent scholars to study these problems: "As long as these decrees propose views which are neither immediately nor mediately connected with truths of faith and morals, it goes without saying that the scholar may pursue his research, provided always that he defers to the supreme teaching authority of the Church" (p. 24). I am not willing to buy all of that last statement. But perhaps there is a principle there which we as good Protestants could adopt. We should certainly give Protestant scholars as much liberty in grappling with the difficult critical problems of the Bible, as the Papal Commission is willing to grant Catholic scholars.

#### A SPECIAL APPEAL TO OUR ALUMNI

Have you done your part in helping to meet the goal of the Alumni Fund?

Yours with all good wishes,

*William Sanford LaSor*

William Sanford LaSor