

21. WA, DB, III & IV.
22. These notes too have been published. Cf. WA, DB, III & IV.
23. Reu, p 235.
24. LW, XXXV, 249.

## LUTHER AND PSALM 8

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Perhaps no Psalm has suffered more at the hands of interpreters than has Psalm 8. Luther calls it "a glorious prophecy about Christ."<sup>1</sup> The majority of modern interpreters, however, fail to find Christ in it. Blaiklock, for example, describes it as a "nature psalm."<sup>2</sup> Westermann calls it a "creation psalm."<sup>3</sup> Dahood designates it as "a hymn celebrating God's infinite majesty (vs. 2-5) and the dignity and power to which God has raised man (vs. 6-10)."<sup>4</sup> Weiser entitles it "Creator and Creature."<sup>5</sup> The American Bible Society's *Good News Bible* (GNB) gives it the title "God's Glory and Man's Dignity."<sup>6</sup>

Those commentators who see it as Messianic in a typical sense almost without exception do not interpret it as a prophecy of Christ's humiliation and exaltation. Leupold, for example, holds that the subject of the Psalm is "God's Glory as Revealed in Man's Dignity." It is Messianic by type in his view, however, inasmuch as "man as created reflects God's glory. But the Son of man, in whom the original pattern is more fully realized, reflects this same glory far more perfectly."<sup>7</sup> What Leupold is claiming is that Adam before the Fall was a type of Christ, the Second Adam.

Luther, on the other hand, interprets the Psalm as direct or rectilinear Messianic prophecy. "David," he says, "describes Christ's person

and kingdom and teaches who Christ is; what kind of kingdom He has and how it is formed; where this King rules, namely, in all lands and yet in heaven; and the means by which His kingdom is founded and regulated, namely, only through the Word and faith, without sword and armor."<sup>8</sup> Luther, "the Prince of All Exegetes" as Honsey calls him,<sup>9</sup> succeeded in grasping the Messianic meaning of the Psalm which, according to the New Testament, is its God-intended sense.<sup>10</sup>

Luther's interpretation of the Old Testament has been criticized on the ground that he failed "to grasp fully and apply consistently the law of the development and gradual progress of divine revelation." He has been charged with reading "New Testament revelation and conceptions into the Old Testament, as though they were contained there in their full development and definiteness instead of being present only in germ."<sup>11</sup>

While it is true that God's revelation was progressive or cumulative, it is also a fundamental principle of hermeneutics that Scripture interprets Scripture. Using the New Testament to interpret the Old Testament does not make the interpreter guilty of reading something into the text; it is rather essential for a correct understanding of the Old Testament. Jesus himself opened the Old Testament Scriptures for his disciples by explaining to them what was said in them concerning him (Lk 24:27, 32, 44-47).<sup>12</sup>

The Old Testament prophets admittedly did not fully understand all that the Holy Spirit inspired them to write. We are told that they "searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow" (1 Pe 1:10,11).

This does not mean that they understood nothing of what they wrote. Peter expressly states that they realized that the Spirit was speaking about the coming Messiah's suffering and glory, his humiliation and exaltation. But those prophets carefully studied their own writings to learn as much as they could about the when and how of the fulfillment of the prophecies which the Spirit had revealed to and through them. In his Pentecost sermon Peter clearly says that David "seeing what was ahead, . . . spoke of the resurrection of Christ" (Ac 2:31). In other words, David realized that the Savior who would come from his line would die and rise again. But he did not know all the circumstances of Jesus' death and resurrection as we now know them from the New Testament.

It is not the purpose of this brief article to review Luther's exegesis of Psalm 8 point by point. We wish merely to examine first of all in what sense Luther sees this Psalm as "a glorious prophecy about Christ," and, secondly, how he justifies his interpretation. Luther expounded this Psalm in a sermon he preached on November 1, 1537. The sermon was taken down by Georg Roerer, and on the basis of Roerer's notes Andreas Poach prepared and published the commentary in 1572.

Luther finds Christ in the opening words of the Psalm, "O Lord, our Ruler, how glorious is Thy name in all the lands!"<sup>13</sup> Luther notes that David at the very beginning of this Psalm speaks of the coming King, whom he calls "Lord" (*yhwah*) and "Ruler" (*'adhôn*). "Lord," he says, "is a special and proper name of God and means 'the right, true, and eternal God.'" "Ruler" refers to "the human nature and the external rule of this King over us men." This leads Luther to conclude that since this King is called "Lord, our Ruler," "it follows that He must be true God and true man at the same time."<sup>14</sup> David realized, of course, that the coming Messiah would be both true God and true man, as Jesus pointed out to the Jews on the basis of Psalm 110 (Mt 22:41-46).

That Luther is right in recognizing the opening words as the theme of Psalm 8 is evident from the fact that David, utilizing the cyclic pattern known as *inclusio*, concludes the Psalm by repeating these words verbatim in verse 9, "O Lord, our Ruler, how glorious is Thy name in all the lands!" The subject of the Psalm is not, therefore, the dignity of man, but the glory of God's name, his revelation of himself as the Savior-God.<sup>15</sup> He is the God of free, unmerited grace, who as the unchangeable I AM (Ex 3:14) faithfully keeps his promise to forgive iniquity, transgression and sin (Ex 34:6,7). "I am the LORD (*yhwah*)," he declares through the prophet Isaiah, "that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols" (Is 42:8). No other god can claim to be man's Savior from sin. This honor belongs to Jesus Christ alone, as Peter testifies, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Ac 4:12).

Luther points out that through the Spirit David foresaw that the gospel would go out into all the world and that people of all nations would glorify God for their salvation. David was transported in spirit to the time of the New Testament. Addressing the Messiah in the opening words of the Psalm, David, according to Luther's paraphrase, exclaims,

Before Thy coming to earth, O King, Thou art praised and thanked only in the tiny narrow corner of Judea and in Jerusalem. But after Thy

coming there will be more ringing and singing, thanking and praising, not in the narrow corner of Judea alone, but in all the lands under heaven, throughout the world.<sup>16</sup>

Developing his theme, the glory of Messiah's name, David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest destroy the enemy and the avenger" (v 2).

The enemy and avenger is, of course, the devil. Two of his characteristics are mentioned. "First, that he is the enemy of Christ and His church; second, that he is full of vengeance, and this without any reason except that he cannot stand Christ and His Gospel."<sup>17</sup>

The power God has ordained to overthrow the devil and his kingdom is the gospel. In the eyes of men the gospel is weak and foolish, but it is in fact a mighty power (*ōz*), even in the mouths of little children. By it God establishes "a strong, powerful kingdom, which will stand and abide against all the power of the world, yes, against the gates of hell."<sup>18</sup> Christ's kingdom is established, then, "not with human force, wisdom, counsel or power, but with the Word and the Gospel preached by infants and sucklings."<sup>19</sup> How strange and wondrous are God's ways! "Precisely because the enemies boast of their power and might, God wants to destroy them with the mouths of babes and sucklings, as butter melts on the fire."<sup>20</sup>

The *crux* of the Psalm lies in verses 4 and 5. Luther translates these as follows:

- 4 What is Man that Thou art mindful of Him  
and the Son of Man that Thou dost care for Him?
- 5 Thou wilt let Him be forsaken of God for a little while,  
but Thou wilt crown Him with honor and adornment.

Those who hold that man's dignity as the crown of creation is the theme of the Psalm claim the line of thought is something like this: In comparison with the vast heavens created by God man seems so insignificant; but in reality he is just a step below God or the angels. Several translations also imply this. The GNB, for example, translates verse 5,

Yet you made him inferior only to yourself;  
you crowned him with glory and honor.

The NIV has,

You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory and honor.

A footnote offers the alternative "Or *than God*" for "than the heavenly beings."

It is obvious that the thought of verse 5 in Luther's translation is the opposite of that in the GNB and NIV. As Luther translates it, the parallelism is antithetic. The verse speaks of an individual's deep humiliation. He was forsaken by God for a little while. But then he was exalted, being crowned with glory and honor. According to the other versions the parallelism is synonymous. It describes man's high, exalted position; he ranks just below God or the angels.

Those who interpret the Psalm as typical Messianic prophecy translate verse 5 like the GNB and NIV. Leupold, for example, renders the verse:

And Thou didst make him lack but little of God,  
With glory and honor Thou didst crown him.

He makes the comment, "Nowhere is man's dignity asserted more clearly and boldly than in this passage." But he emphasizes, "The reference is to man before the fall."<sup>21</sup>

Luther, on the other hand, interprets this as direct Messianic prophecy. In his view David is speaking, not of man in general, but of the one man, Jesus Christ. He emphasizes that the Hebrew word David uses for "man," *'enōsh*, means "a troubled, pitiful, and miserable human being, as in Psalm 9:20: 'Put them in fear, O Lord! Let the nations know that they are but men!' that is, poor miserable, wretched human beings." So David, Luther says, "calls Christ *'enōsh*, 'man,' because of the trouble and sorrow He had on earth."<sup>22</sup> It is true, of course, that the word *'enōsh* cannot properly be applied to man before the Fall.

Neither is the other expression David uses, son of man, appropriate for Adam, the first human being. Referring this term to Christ, Luther argues that David "calls Him 'Son of Adam' or 'Son of Man' because of His nature, that He was born of a human being rather than immediately created by God as Adam was created from a clod of earth or Eve was made from Adam's rib, but was born in an ordinary though supernatural way, 'by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary,' as the Christian creed teaches. Christ takes this name from this psalm and in the Gospel calls Himself 'the Son of Man,' because He was born of a human mother and assumed all the properties of a true man, yet without sin."<sup>23</sup>

"Son of Man" as a Messianic title is also found in Daniel 7:13,14, another grand Messianic prophecy. There Daniel says, "In my vision at night I looked and there before me was one like a son of man (*kebhar 'enāsh*), coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient

of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (NIV). "Son of Man" is used 78 times in the New Testament in reference to Jesus Christ and was obviously derived from these Old Testament prophecies.

A line somewhat similar to verse 4 and yet different occurs in Psalm 144:3, which was also penned by David:

O LORD, what is man (*'adhām*) that you care for him,  
the son of man (*ben 'enōsh*) that you think of him?

Luther does not mention this passage, undoubtedly because the context in Psalm 144 makes it clear that the reference is to man in general: "Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow" (v 4).

In Psalm 8, however, Luther says that David pictures Christ in distinction from all men on earth and says,

"What is Man that Thou art mindful of Him, and the Son of Man that Thou dost care for Him?" He says this about the height and depth of Christ's humiliation. For he looks at Christ in His greatest torment and highest suffering, that He is mocked, spit upon, scourged, crowned, and crucified, as St. Paul also says about such humiliation (Phil 2:8): "He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." In such humiliation no one regarded Him as a man, but all those who passed by (Lm 1:12) shook their heads and said: "Ugh! How God has cursed this man that He should hang on the cross!"<sup>24</sup>

Relating this now to the theme of the Psalm in verse 1, Luther continues:

David is amazed at this and says: "Is it really possible or ought one believe that God would be mindful of such a wretched and miserable man and care for a son of man who dies so miserably executed on a cross? Is He supposed to be the dearest child and the chosen one of God, He whom everyone spits upon, mocks, and blasphemes? How foolishly God acts! Is He supposed to be God's Son, the Lord, our Ruler, whose name is glorious in all the lands and to whom thanks are given in heaven — He who hangs on the cross and is regarded as a mockery and curse of the people?"<sup>25</sup>

Turning now to verse 5, "Thou wilt let Him be forsaken of God for a little while," Luther insists that "in the spirit David is here looking at Christ as He struggles with death in the garden and cries out on the cross, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' (Mt 27:46)."<sup>26</sup> What this means, he says, "no man on earth understands, and no man can reach or express it in words. For to be forsaken of God is far worse than death."<sup>27</sup> But this forsaking, according to David's prophecy, "is

not to be for long, much less forever, but only a little time, only for several hours."<sup>28</sup>

One may wonder: How can this passage possibly be interpreted as describing the dignity of man? Such an interpretation is all the more perplexing in view of the fact that verses 4 and 5 are quoted in the New Testament. Luther was very much aware of this and addressed himself to the use that the Epistle to the Hebrews makes of Psalm 8.

Recall the context. In the first chapter of the Epistle the holy writer, citing a great deal of evidence from the Old Testament, demonstrates that Christ is in an absolute sense and without any qualification "superior to the angels" (He 1:4). In the second chapter he shows that this same Jesus, who by nature ranked so far above the angels, had to be made "lower than the angels" (He 2:9) in order to be man's Savior. In his *Lectures on Hebrews* Luther says, "God caused Him to be forsaken not only by His divinity but also by the protection of angels and all power there is in the world."<sup>29</sup>

The pertinent section in Hebrews 2 reads as follows:

5 For it was not to angels that He gave authority over that world to be, of which we are speaking. 6 For someone somewhere has solemnly said:

"What is man that you should think of him,  
Or the Son of Man that you should care for Him?"

7 You made Him inferior to the angels for a little while,  
Yet you have crowned Him with glory and honor,  
You have set Him over the works of your hands,

8 You have put all things under His feet!"

Now when He gave Him authority over everything, He did not leave a single thing that was not put under His authority. But as yet we do not see everything actually under His authority, 9 but we do see Jesus, who was made inferior to the angels for a little while, crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death, so that by God's favor He might experience death for every human being.<sup>30</sup>

Both Calvin, who interprets the Psalm humanistically, and Perowne, who considers it to be Messianic in a typical sense, recognize the problem the New Testament presents for their interpretation. "For David," Perowne says, "is speaking of *man's greatness* as being little less than divine; the writer of the Epistle applies the passage to the *humiliation of Christ*."<sup>31</sup> Calvin solves the difficulty by denying that the writer to the Hebrews interprets the Psalm. He argues that what the writer says in that passage about the abasement of Christ "is not intended by him as an explanation of this text; but for the purpose of

enriching and illustrating the subject on which he is discoursing, he introduces and accommodates to it what had been spoken in a different sense."<sup>32</sup>

The view that it is the dignity of man which is spoken about in the Psalm does not agree with the New Testament passages which quote verses 4 and 5 of the Psalm. It is the Son of Man in his state of humiliation who was forsaken by God and was deprived even of the ministry of the angels which he customarily enjoyed (Jn 1:51). Hebrews 2:7 says that he was "inferior to the angels for a little while." This is a quote of the Septuagint version of the Psalms (ἡλάττωσας αὐτὸν Βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους).<sup>33</sup> That the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews focuses on this aspect of Christ's being forsaken by God is not surprising in view of his line of thought, comparing Christ with the angels. Commenting on Hebrews 2:7, Luther insists that "in the proper sense this verse can be understood only as referring to Christ. . . . Therefore those who think that this verse refers to the dignity of human nature, which is very close to that of the angels, follow an improper understanding."<sup>34</sup>

As Luther observes, the writer to the Hebrews sees in the Psalm a prophecy of Christ's humiliation and exaltation. "We see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor" (He 2:9). Luther, therefore, rightly calls David's words in Psalms 8:5b "a glorious prophecy of the resurrection of Christ and of His coronation."<sup>35</sup>

Luther argues forcefully that also verse 6 of the Psalm can be understood only of Christ, "Thou wilt make Him Lord over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under His feet." Focusing on the words, "Thou wilt make Him Lord," Luther asks, "Which 'Him'?" The answer: "Him whom He has permitted to be forsaken of God for a little while and whom He will crown with honor and adornment. Therefore he is speaking of the exaltation and glorification of Christ after His resurrection from the dead."<sup>36</sup>

According to his divine nature, Luther notes, Christ was Lord over all creatures before he became man. But after his humiliation, when he arose from the dead and ascended into heaven, he was made Lord according to his humanity "so that also on our behalf He might be Lord over everything in heaven and earth."<sup>37</sup>

Luther emphasizes the words, "Thou hast put all things under His feet." He says,

This passage is quoted powerfully in Hebrews 2:8: "In putting everything in subjection to Him, He left nothing outside His control." Adam in

paradise is also made lord over God's creatures and works, but not everything is put under his feet. Yes, according to the first creation no man is made lord over another man, much less over angels. The text in Genesis 1:28 reads this way: "Have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." In comparison with the dominion of Christ, that is still a small dominion, namely, a dominion of human reason over fish, birds, and animals. Here the text reads much differently: "Thou hast put all things under His feet," excluding nothing but the Father, who has subjected everything to the Son (1 Cor 15:27). And this dominion extends to angels, men, and everything that is in heaven and on earth.<sup>38</sup>

Luther cites Ephesians 1:20-23, "He raised Him from the dead and made Him sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and He has put all things under His feet and has made Him the head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." He refers to Peter's statement that Jesus "is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him (1 Pe 3:22) and the remark quoted in Hebrews 1:6, "Let all God's angels worship Him."

"Therefore," Luther insists, "Christ is a much greater and higher lord than Adam was before the Fall. For. . . everything is put under Christ's feet, so that the whole world and all His enemies will have to be His footstool (Ps 110:1)."<sup>39</sup>

But is not David speaking of Adam's dominion when he mentions "all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea" (vv 7,8)? This is an obvious allusion to Genesis 1:26. But Luther argues, "What Adam received in Paradise, that David subjects here to Christ. . . . Therefore everything in the wide world belongs to Christ, the Ruler."<sup>40</sup>

What does this mean for us? It means, Luther says, that Christ will richly provide for us, his Christians, as Paul says, "All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor 3:21-23).

"O Lord, our Ruler, how glorious is Thy name in all the lands!" (v 9). And so, as Luther says, "David concludes this psalm just the way he began it. He thanks the Lord, our Ruler, for His great and inestimable blessing, for establishing such a kingdom and calling and gathering His church, which gloriously praises His name throughout the world and thanks Him in heaven. Let us follow the example of this singer of praises as he prophesies to us."<sup>41</sup>

Although, as Luther demonstrates, this magnificent Psalm is a direct prophecy of Christ, the dignity and glorious destiny of man are indirectly included. They are the splendid fruit of the Messiah's redemptive work.<sup>42</sup> For Christ gained his kingdom *for us*. He is the Son of God, whom his Father has appointed "heir of all things" (He 1:2). But he is also the Son of man, our Brother (He 2:11). By God's grace we who believe in him are his co-heirs, destined to share in his glory (He 2:10; Ro 8:17).

Not to angels, but to Christ God "has subjected the world to come" (He 2:5), and we have our heavenly Father's gracious promise that "if we endure, we will also reign with him" (2 Tm 2:12). And Jesus himself, our victorious King, gives us his unfailing assurance, "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne" (Re 3:21). As his co-regents we shall reign for ever and ever (Re 22:5).

What a glorious destiny is ours! But it is ours only *in Christ*, the Son of Man. He is the Second Adam, the God-appointed representative of our fallen race. As our Substitute "he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:8-11).

"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

### ENDNOTES

1. LW, XII, 98.
2. E. M. Blaiklock, *Commentary on the Psalms* (Philadelphia and New York: A. J. Holman Company, 1977), I; 29.
3. Claus Westermann, *The Psalms, Structure, Content & Message*, translated by Ralph D. Gehrke (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), p 97.
4. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms (The Anchor Bible)* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966), I, 49.
5. Artur Weiser, *The Psalms, A Commentary*, translated by Herbert Hartwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p 139.
6. The heading in the *New American Standard Bible* is very similar: "The Lord's Glory and Man's Dignity." *The New American Bible*, the 1970 Catholic translation, has: "The Majesty of God and the Dignity of Man."
7. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Columbus: Wartburg, 1959), p 101. Franz Delitzsch calls the Psalm "a lyric echo of the Mosaic account of creation" and remarks, "All that this Psalm says of the man of the present[!] becomes in the light of the New Testament in its relation to the history of redemption, a prophecy of the Son of man *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, and of the

new humanity" (*Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, translated by Francis Bolton, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871, p 148, 157). Derek Kidner suggests that the Psalm's answer to the question, "What is man?" is expounded in the New Testament "as carrying implications which only the incarnation, death and reign of Christ are big enough to satisfy" (*Psalms 1-72*, London: Inter-Varsity, 1973, p 66.) Unfortunately, in his exposition he says nothing more about this.

8. LW, XII, 98.
9. R. E. Honsey, "Exegesis of Psalm 8:3-6," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, Vol. XVIII (June 1978), p 11.
10. Cf Abraham Calov, *Biblia Testam. Veteris Illustrata* (Dresden & Leipzig, 1719); Johann George Starke, *Synopsis*, IV (Leipzig: Bernhard Christoph Breitkopf, 1750); G. Stoeckhardt, *Ausgewählte Psalmen* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1915); C. M. Zorn, (Zwickau: E. Klaerner, 1921); Paul E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, The Old Testament*, Vol. II (St. Louis: Concordia, 1924); George O. Lillegard, *Commentary on the Chief Messianic Psalms*, publisher and date not indicated; R. E. Honsey, *op cit*.
11. M. Reu, *Homiletics*, translated by Albert Steinhäuser (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1944), p 279.
12. Cf G. Stoeckhardt: "The interpretation which the Holy Ghost gives in the New Testament merely intensifies the light which that prophecy contains in itself. In connection with the Eighth Psalm . . . one could initially doubt that it is speaking about Christ, the Messiah. Whoever looks at the words of this Psalm only superficially will perhaps get the impression that it is only in a general way praising God the Creator, who has glorified himself in his creation, especially in man, the lord and king of creation. That is the way the Psalm is understood and explained by the unbelieving and also the so-called revelation-believing interpreters of more recent times. God has created heaven and earth, sun, moon, and stars, sheep and oxen and the wild animals, the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea; and God has appointed puny man, who is hardly worth considering, as lord of all creatures and has subjected everything to him. That is supposedly the content of this praise of God. If one, however, examines the individual statements more closely, the question soon arises if the Psalm does not after all intend to say something more. . . . Whoever compares prophecy and fulfillment will have no doubt: Jesus Christ is the heart of this Psalm. David is speaking here of no one else" (*Adventspredigten, Auslegung der vornehmsten Weissagungen des Alten Testaments*, St. Louis: Concordia, 1887, pp 69-70, translated).
13. The translation is taken from LW, XII, 95ff.
14. LW, XII, 99.
15. Kretzmann appropriately entitles the Psalm, "The Glory of Messiah's Name" (*op cit*).
16. LW, XII, 99.
17. LW, XII, 116.
18. LW, XII, 108.
19. *Ibid*.
20. LW, XII, 115.
21. Leupold, p 104.
22. LW, XII, 122.

23. LW, XII, 122f.
24. LW, XII, 123.
25. LW, XII, 124.
26. LW, XII, 126.
27. LW, XII, 124.
28. LW, XII, 127.
29. LW, XXIX, 127.
30. Charles B. Williams, *The New Testament in the Language of the People* (Chicago: Moody, 1972).
31. J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms* (George Bell & Sons, 1878. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), I, p 152.
32. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, translated by James Anderson (Calvin Translation Society, 1843-1855. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), I, p 105. E. W. Hengstenberg, following Calvin's lead, calls the reference to the humiliation of Christ in Hebrews 2, not an exposition, but "homiletical application (*homiletische Anwendung*)" of the Psalm (*Commentar ueber die Psalmen*, Berlin: Ludwig Oehmigke, 1849, I, 169).
33. The phrase *ἑλάττωσα* is an adverbial accusative and in itself may indicate either degree or time: "a little lower" or "for a little while lower" (cf F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964, p 34). Luther on the basis of the context argues forcefully for the temporal sense "since not one iota makes it mean that Christ was made a little lower than the angels" (LW XXIX, 129).

The Septuagint's rendering of *elôhim* with *ἀγγέλους*, which is adopted then also in Hebrews 2, has occasioned considerable debate. Bruce notes, "The question is whether Heb. *elôhim* here denotes God in the usual OT sense, or is a plural in sense as well as in form, meaning 'divine beings' or 'angels'" (*op cit*, p 34). He says that the Hebrew is most naturally translated "God," as in the *American Standard Version*, the *Revised Standard Version*, the *New American Standard Bible*, Beck's *An American Translation*, the footnote in the NIV and other versions. But he also thinks the LXX may well be right. "Angels" is the rendering of the KJV. Leupold, in support of his view that the Psalm is speaking of the rare dignity of primordial man, the first Adam before the Fall, writes, "The statement is so bold that the early translators, beginning with the *Septuagint* and continuing up to the A.V., have substituted the word 'angels' for 'God' (*elôhim*). Though this translation, commonly found in older versions is remotely justifiable, the context would definitely have to indicate that such beings are meant, and then it would at best be but a dubious statement. . . . We are strongly of the opinion that *elôhim* should here be translated in its plain and regular meaning 'God'" (*op cit*, pp 104, 107). Luther discusses the question at length in his *Lectures on Hebrews* and concludes that "it makes no difference whether in this place *elôhim* refers to God, angels, judges, or any persons in high positions, though it would be more proper to take it as referring to 'God'" (LW XXIX, 127).

Luther does not discuss the verb *watthasserêhû*. He translates it in the Psalm, *Du wirst ihn lassen verlassen sein*, "You will let him be forsaken." In Hebrews 2, where the New Testament, following the LXX, has *ἑλάττωσα*, Luther translates, *Du hast ihn mangeln lassen*, "You have let him lack." It should be noted that a parallel use of the word *hâsêr* with *min* occurs in

Ecclesiastes 4:8, *ûnehassêr 'eth naphshî mittôbhâh*, "and I am depriving myself of enjoyment" (NIV). Honsey points out that it "served the specific purpose of the unknown author [of Hebrews] to emphasize that during His humiliation Jesus was made even lower than the angels, consequently adopting not only the Greek word *ἀγγέλους* but also the verb *ἑλάττωσα*, which lends itself better to the meaning 'made lower than' than the meaning 'was without' . . . This adaptive type of quotation is neither uncommon nor objectionable when properly understood in accordance with the purposes of the sacred writers" (*op cit.*, p 34).

34. LW, XXIX, 126.
35. LW, XII, 130.
36. LW, XII, 131. Note that the Formula of Concord cites Psalm 8:1,6 as a prophecy that Christ not only as God but also as man would rule from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth (S.D., VIII, 27; *Concordia Triglotta*, p 1025; Tappert, p 596).
37. LW, XII, 132.
38. LW, XII, 133.
39. LW, XII, 134.
40. LW, XII, 134f.
41. LW, XII, 135f.
42. Cf George Stoeckhardt: "We find here delineated, not the praise and glory of the Creator, but the praise and glory of the Redeemer. The 8th Psalm treats of Christ, the Son of man, who through His humiliation and exaltation has raised up fallen men and brought back to them their lost honor and dominion" (*Lectures on Select Psalms*, translated by H.W. Degner, Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic, 1965, p 34).