
Introduction:

Scripture, Tradition, and Proclamation within the Horizon of Year A

“An account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ...”
(Matthew 1:1a)

So begins Matthew’s account of the good news of Jesus Christ, the gospel that provides the narrative backbone for the liturgical year that begins in a few weeks. Matthew’s language mimics the Old Testament genealogies. The Greek word *geneleos* is translated from the Hebrew *tol’doth*, which in addition to “generations” can be understood as history or account as well. Matthew, then, begins by reaching back to the beginning, “These are the generations (*tol-doth, geneleos*) of the heavens and the earth when they were created...” (Gen 2:4a). There is a sense in this opening to Matthew’s gospel, also the opening to the whole of the New Testament, that this narration has something to do with the fullness of the story of God’s relationship with the world. The sweep of this wholeness is picked-up again at the end of Matthew’s narrative, where the crucified and risen Christ promises, “... remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20).

The title of this issue is “Scripture, Tradition, and Proclamation within the Horizon of Year A.” As Christians we live in this liturgical rhythm of Christ’s life, from the First Sunday of Advent through to Christ the King Sunday. We hear from large portions of Scripture all in orbit of this Christo-centric narrative, which in Year A is Matthew’s telling.

Our telling of the story is central to the church’s identity, and it is done best in conversation with those who have proclaimed before us and with the world that we inhabit. This is the focus of this issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission*. Our contributors offer vantages on this proclamatory telling that flows from Scripture, taking seriously the tradition (the witness of those who have gone before), toward our telling the story anew.¹

With the beginning of Year A of the Revised Common Lectionary on the First Sunday of Advent—November 27, 2016, the church moves into what is commonly called the Year of Matthew. The place of the book of Romans in Year A is often overlooked. **Jan Schnell Rippentrop**, Alex Jacob and Gerda Maria Swanson Carlson Chair in Homiletics at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, serves as a faithful guide to the role and proclamation of

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the gospel of reconciliation in Paul’s letter to the church in Rome.

One of the primary movements of the Sixteenth-Century Reformation was the recovery of the importance of preaching to the life of the church and faith of Christians. **Martin Lohrmann**, Assistant Professor of Lutheran Confessions and Heritage, Wartburg Theological Seminary, draws our attention to Martin Luther’s valuation of the proclamation of the gospel in and for the life of the church by way of exploring Luther’s teaching and direction given in his Church Postils, guides for engagement with the biblical text and proclamation. In particular, Lohrmann draws the reader’s attention to the intersection of faith and love, beliefs and actions in Luther’s postils for the first Sundays of Advent and to Luther’s warning about the danger of becoming a “pretty kitten.”

Protestants are often skittish about the role of tradition, undervaluing the witness and wisdom of those who have gone before us in the faith. Our Orthodox Christian brothers and sisters in Christ provide a counter-testimony to this skittishness in their full embrace of the Patristic hermeneutical and doctrinal foundation of the church—the living tradition of Christian witness stretching back to the earliest years of the church. Father **Demetrios E. Tonia**, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Hellenic College, and Dean of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of New England, steers our attention to the work and witness of John Chrysostom, whose preaching—both intent and content—remains relevant to the call to proclaim the gospel today.

“Receive the Holy Spirit,” said the risen Christ to the disciples behind locked doors. Pastor **Raymond Johnson**, lead pastor at The Journey Church in West Chester, Pennsylvania, explores the history of this text’s interpretation and its significance for the church’s understanding of our mission. Johnson draws our attention to Luther’s homiletical interpretation of John 20:19–23, that grounds the church’s mission, i.e., absolution and proclamation, in the authority of the Word of God alone.

Our Focus spotlight essay of this issue shines a light on the

1. “[A person] can correspond in his [or her] language to the humanity of God only by *constantly telling the story anew*.” Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, Darrell L. Guder, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 304.

deliberation and decision-making regarding the full inclusions of homosexual people in the life of the church in Iceland. **Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir**, Academic Dean and Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Iceland, tells the story of the movement within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Iceland to open the rite of marriage fully to same sex couples. Cognizant of both the importance and the difficulty of such conversations in churches around the world, I give thanks for the witness of the Church of Iceland's faithful and care-full process.

I am grateful for the contributions of these authors to our common theological work and mission centered in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ for the sake of the world. May their work be a blessing.

With this issue, I sign off of the *Currents* editorial team. I have enjoyed my time in service to *Currents in Theology and Mission*. I have learned a great deal from the authors with whom I have worked and from my administrative and editorial colleagues, in particular Kadi Billman, Craig Nesson, Connie Sletto, River Needham, and Ann Renzy, now of blessed memory. As I turn my attentions elsewhere, I offer you my deep thanks.

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