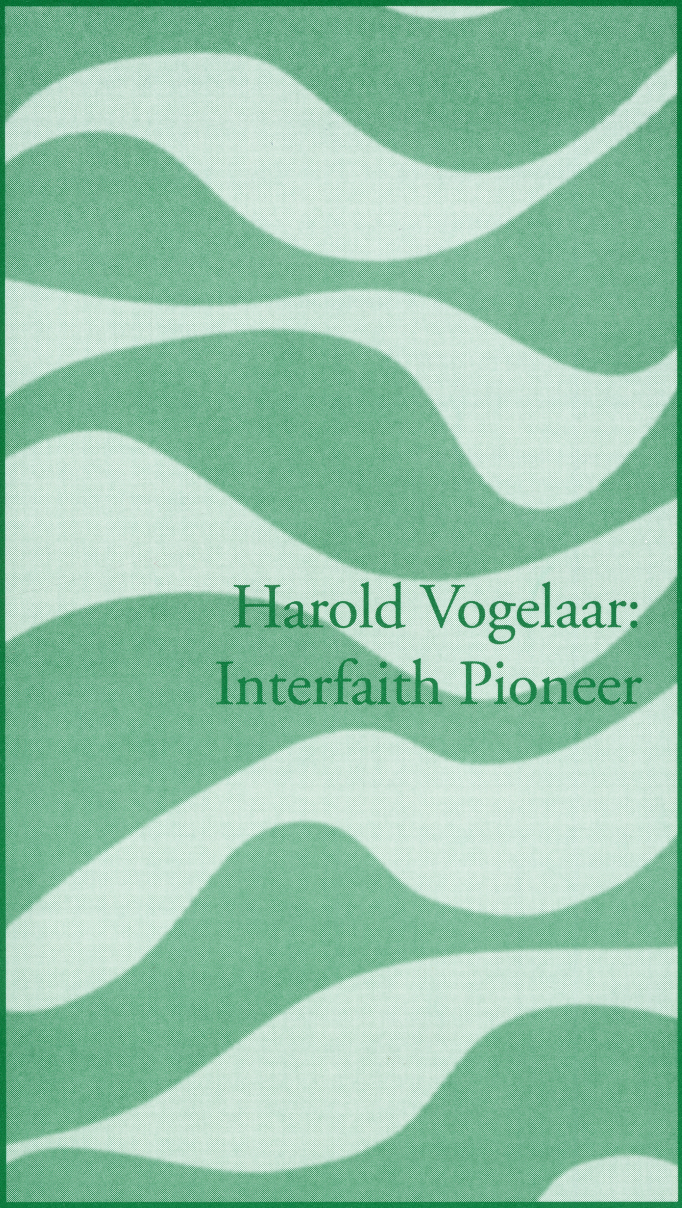
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Harold Vogelaar: Interfaith Pioneer

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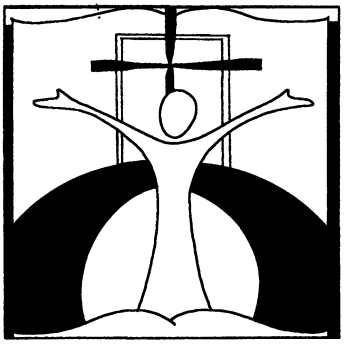
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Harold Vogelaar: Interfaith Pioneer

This summer Harold Vogelaar will retire as Professor of World Religions at LSTC. For the better part of two decades he has worked to build bridges of understanding in Chicago between Christians and Muslims, exploring this relationship in both seminary classroom and many local congregations. This teaching and interfaith ministry followed years of service in Cairo and the Middle East, where he worked as a missionary for the Reformed Church in America and the ELCA. There he served congregations, was a hospital chaplain, and taught at and directed the Center for Study of Religion at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. In his early years of retirement he will direct LSTC's new Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice (CCME). His wife, Mai, a Muslim who hails from Thailand, often joins him in congregational and other forums. The seminary recently was blessed with a generous gift that will endow the chair Harold now holds and establish this new interfaith center. His presence at LSTC began as part of the worldwide ELCA strategy to seek dialogue with Muslims and Islam, a strategy that has taken on added urgency with current international tensions. The essays in this issue are a tribute to him as they explore manifold implications of his own pioneering efforts.

Kathleen D. Billman and **James Kenneth Echols** note that Harold Vogelaar describes Christian witness as an art of friendship. He is a quintessential practictioner of such friendship and also a sojourner ready to let go and entrust the work he does to the voices and hands that will come after. So may we all be.

William E. Lesher was president of LSTC when Harold Vogelaar joined the faculty, and he describes many of the accomplishments in interfaith understanding that Harold has achieved. He also tells how interreligious conversations have led to new insights on how a particular religion relates to other religions. The Lutheran focus on justification by grace, for example, is a strange notion to most people of other religious and spiritual traditions, and it raises an urgent question about our responsibility toward people who do not know Christ. While the stories of religious and spiritual traditions differ widely and have little in common at the conceptual or theological level, many discoveries of deep commonalities are being made at the ethical and spiritual levels. We should embrace every opportunity to engage with people of other faiths as people of faith. The once-for-all act of God, embedded in the doctrine of justification, should enable us to perceive that that which has happened for

us has happened for all human beings and indeed for the whole creation. We should share the revelation of God's grace in Jesus Christ with conviction but without contention. As we learn more about the depth and greatness that is contained in the world's religions, our own sense of the awesome mystery of God will be magnified.

Ghulam-Haider Aasi is a Muslim scholar who has regularly team-taught with Harold Vogelaar at the seminary. He tells of his own experiences in interfaith dialogue, beginning in his native Pakistan. Graduate study in the United States exposed him both to claims that all religions are only the products of particular historical milieus and cultural contexts and to opportunistic proselytization. He pays high praise to Ismail R. al-Faruqi, a pioneer in interfaith conversations from the Muslim side, who advocated the establishment of educational institutions in the United States where Muslims could study their own traditions authentically and critically. Aasi's work at the American Islamic College in Chicago brought him into contact with the bridge-building work of Harold Vogelaar. He describes four major Muslim groups in the United States and their divergent approaches to interfaith dialogue. While the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the World Council of Churches, and the National Council of Churches have supported friendship and respectful dialogue with Islam, the same cannot be said for many in the Evangelical camp. One of the great challenges for both Christians and Muslims is how to share the great advances in interfaith understanding with the grassroots.

Nelly van Doorn-Harder discusses the abiding significance of Patriarch Kyrillos VI, whose reign over the Coptic Orthodox Church extended from 1959 to 1971. Anba Kyrillos was not just a holy man, but he was also brilliant in reading the signs and needs of his time. Kyrillos pursued his vision for monastic renewal with great determination but also stressed that through Christ's message lay people could become vehicles of change just as much as those living the monastic life. Patriarch Kyrillos set out to revive the past and infuse it into the needs of the present. Three examples of such recovery of the past are his living the monastic life in the public eye, his rebuilding the ancient pilgrimage site of St. Menas in Maryoutis, and his allowing women to reenter official church activities. The effects of his reign as Patriarch can be compared with the influential works of Pope John XXIII and Gandhi.

James A. Scherer reports on the novel missionary strategy of the Lutheran Church in America that used people like Harold Vogelaar, on loan from the Reformed Church in America, for its work in the Middle East. After long-time service in Cairo, Harold came to LSTC in 1984 to explore the interface between Christianity and Islam in America. With his excellent command of Arabic and love for Islamic people, Harold quickly gained the confidence of

local Muslim leaders in Chicago. Recently more than a dozen Turkish scholars of Islam have come to Chicago to study in M.A. programs under grants from the Niagara Foundation. Much earlier, another Reformed missionary, Samuel M. Zwemer, became known as the American "apostle to Islam." The new Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice at LSTC does not fit easily under older paradigms of mission or even religious dialogue. For Muslims interfaith dialogue from the outset excludes the possibility of conversion and operates solely for the advancement of Islam. How then will dialogue develop when the basic attitude toward the scriptures of the two faiths is fundamentally different? One urgent aspect of the new Center's work must be to recall Christians to their historic role as committed disciples of Christ and advocates for the Great Commission.

Michael Shelley is another pastor-scholar mentored into the Muslim world by Harold Vogelaar. Both the Bible and the Qur'ān see a close relationship between humanity and the rest of creation, but they also see a distinction. The Bible, for example, declares that humans are created in God's image in order to symbolize and exercise God's dominion over the earth. Humans are not slaves of God but God's agents to whom much is given and from whom much is expected. In the Qur'ān the task of being God's viceregents or deputies is also given to the whole human community. God even instructs the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam, indicating that God's lordship itself is at stake in the human role. The optimism in both the Bible and the Qur'ān about humanity's role in the world seems to overestimate human potential when one considers human injustice and foolishness, but this also suggests interfaith conversation about how together we might carry out our calling.

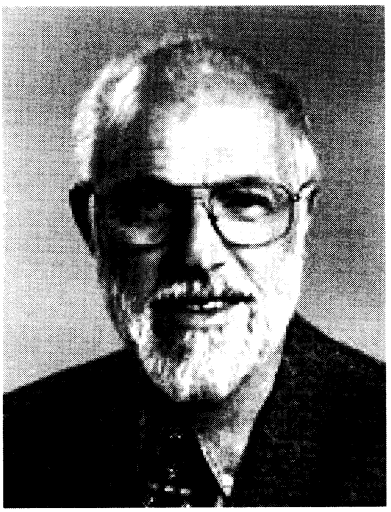
Mark N. Swanson studies the sayings of Luqmān the Wise, who was cited in the Middle Ages by both Christian and Muslim theologians. Luqmān's saying about the rooster, for example, was used in both communities to exhort believers to prayer and to rouse them from heedlessness and negligence. There were realms of common wisdom and common piety shared by Christians and Muslims in the medieval Middle East. The maxims of Luqmān took their place alongside verses from the Bible and a saying from St. John Chrysostom. One of the *sūrahs* in the Qur'ān is even named for him. His wisdom was considered God-given but not in any way in competition with the revelation vouchsafed to Muhammad. Mark Swanson will join the LSTC faculty in the fall as the successor to Harold Vogelaar.

Mark W. Thomsen draws implications from three figures who withdrew into the "Arabian wilderness" for refreshment and renewal: Saul (Paul), Jesus, and Luther. Such a retreat is necessary for us, too, as we reevaluate our theological identity and language in order to communicate effectively God's

Good News. The current focus on security in the United States is often at the expense of the other ninety-five percent of the world's population. The Christian confession implies that we belong first of all to the human race and only secondarily to family and nation. An imperialistic drive and materialistic values indelibly mark our society and even our churches. A Christocentric hermeneutic will free us from considering the frequently violent picture of God in Scripture as the Word of God. The biblical tradition affirms that God's saving activity and revelation are universally present and also that Jesus is the authentic concretization of God's activity and revelation. The vulnerability and suffering of God offer an authentic critique of Christian imperialism. Can we as a contemporary Jesus movement return to the priority of compassion and love and God's call to the vulnerability of divine servanthood embodied in Jesus?

Ralph W. Klein, Editor

Robert H. Smith—In Memoriam



On March 16, 2006, Robert Smith died in his home of complications of leukemia. Bob was an outstanding New Testament scholar and teacher who also edited for many years—and often wrote—*Preaching Helps* for this journal.

We last spoke about a month before his death, when he was beginning a new semester of teaching, fully aware that he had only weeks or at most a few months to live. That conversation was Bob at his best: literate, realistic, faith-filled, joyously connected to God and all the rest of us.

Shortly before his death he completed a commentary on John's Gospel: *Wounded Lord: Reading John through the Eyes of Thomas.* Thomas protested against a Gnostic Jesus and confessed instead that Jesus was fully divine—and fully human. Ours is the ancient temptation to do cosmetic surgery on Christ's body, airbrushing away evidence of his suffering and erasing incarnation. That book must see the light of printer's day.

Bob and I lived through the trials at Concordia Seminary. I still remember those draining nights in his office, when he and I would bat out press releases that tried to tell "our story" in a way that people in society at large could understand what was at stake in fighting for the freedom of the gospel. He was a wordsmith (no pun intended) without peer and an incredible and generous friend.

Bob is survived by his wife, Donna Duensing, his three daughters, and their families, including six grandchildren.

In the moments before his death, Donna exclaimed: "Bob, I love you so much, and God loves you even more." A smile flickered across his face, and then he died.

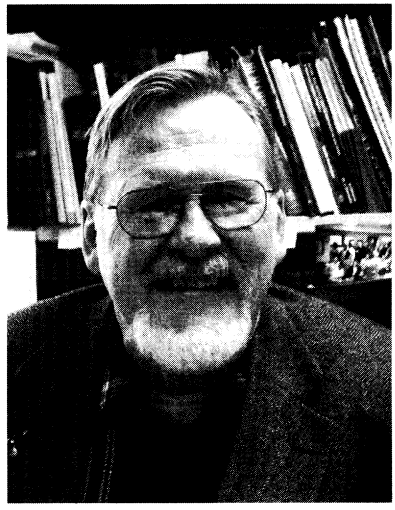
We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's (Rom 14:7–8).

In memory and in hope,

Ralph W. Klein

Harold Vogelaar: "Within the Frame of Friendship"

Kathleen D. Billman
and James Kenneth Echols
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago



Harold Vogelaar

Harold Vogelaar describes Christian witness as an art of friendship. Engaging such issues as life and death, justice and peace, and diverging points of doctrine across religious boundaries requires the capacity to build the kind of relationships where honest talk about all kinds of things can occur: the kind of talk that changes the way we think, the way we act, the way we live. Of his work Harold has said, "I had come to accept that for me Christian witness was the key element. . . . Within the frame of friendship, we could talk on any subject, and did. . . . I found it to be a very fruitful ministry."[1]

The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago was just the right place for a missionary pastor and seminary teacher to sojourn before launching his next adventure. In 1990, when Harold began a

1. Jan Boden, "Following Jesus: Harold Vogelaar's Faithful Journey," *LSTC Epistle* 36:1 (Winter 2006), 10. The article profiles Harold Vogelaar's ministry from his boyhood in Iowa to his long ministry in the Middle East and teaching at LSTC.

two-year appointment as Visiting Professor of World Religions, he thought he might return to the parish after the appointment ended. But the sojourn extended. As Harold put it, "We stayed on at LSTC for another year, and then another."[2]

Sixteen years later, what a difference that sojourn has made at LSTC! In so many ways, Harold Vogelaar stopped being a "visitor" long ago. His friendships with Muslim colleagues in Chicago led to many team-taught courses in Christianity and Islam and a cherished friendship with Dr. Ghulam-Haider Aasi of the American Islamic College, now an adjunct faculty member at LSTC. Although both friends had engaged in a multitude of conversations over the years in congregations and mosques, in the wake of September 11, 2001, they were constantly on the road together, encouraging open dialogue and mutual understanding amid a climate of rising fear and hostility.

Harold and his wife, Pisamai ("Mai"), may be found at many "tables" at LSTC. Committed to honest dialogue and passionate about justice, they embody the commitment to see people as people and problems as problems, even as they act on behalf of the less powerful partners. While it is not easy to encounter deep differences, especially when the differences we encounter challenge long-held ways of viewing the world and cherished convictions, they spend themselves on practices of friendship and hospitality, embodying the hope that the human community may find other paths through disagreement than trying to annihilate the opposition. Their many practices of friendship are leavening influences in a seminary community that wrestles with many kinds of differences.

While Harold is not, in one sense, a visitor any longer, in another sense he has shown us that the "visiting life" is a very fruitful life. Viewing ourselves as sojourners is an antidote to the pressure to build towers and an encouragement to sow seeds. For as long as we have known Harold, his sense of himself as being a sojourner has contributed to his steady reassurance that he is ready to let go and entrust the work to the hands and voices that will come after. In this sense, he has shown us that we are all sojourners; our citizenship is located in the call and promise of God, not in the edifices we create.

Paradoxically, it is this visitor, or sojourner, among us whose legacy will be remembered through the newly endowed Harold S. Vogelaar Chair of Christian-Muslim Studies and Interfaith Relations and LSTC's new Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice. Both are made possible through significant gifts and pledges by Gerald A. and Karen A. Kolschowsky and the Gerald A. and Karen A. Kolschowsky Foundation, Inc., and will be inaugurated and celebrated in September 2006. As a result, LSTC will remain a leading seminary in preparing students for ministry in an interfaith context and in providing educational and cultural opportunities that will bring Christians and Muslims together in a common commitment to mutual understanding and respect that promotes peace and justice in the world. We are delighted that Harold has agreed to serve as the Center's first director.

Thus it is that sojourners do leave unforgettable traces of their work in the world: their efforts, their hopes, and their friendship with God, creation, and their brothers and sisters. Thank you, Harold, for being such a friend.

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2. Boden, "Following Jesus," 11.

An Intra-Lutheran Perspective on the Interreligious Movement

William E. Lesher
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Appreciation

The world today needs more Harold Vogelaars. Harold knows, loves, and can describe with clarity the beauty, power, and spiritual depth of the Islamic religion.

In just a few months after his arrival at LSTC, Harold had met many Imams and visited most of the mosques in the Chicago area. Often he was accompanied in the classroom by a professor from the Islamic College of America, a newly established institution on the near north side of the city. By midterm he had organized a Saturday marriage workshop for Christian-Muslim couples.

During the Bosnian conflict, Harold arranged for the two of us to visit a mosque in the suburbs. There we listened to a young Imam from Bosnia and two long-time members of the congregation tell of the atrocities Christians were visiting daily on Muslims in their home region. It was very painful for them to describe and heart-wrenching for us to hear. Harold's purpose in arranging this meeting was to give us an opportunity to apologize for the brutal actions of our Christian brothers and sisters. It was a hard but necessary deed.

At one of my last commencements as president of LSTC, I had the historic privilege of conferring an M.Div. degree on a Muslim student who was preparing to be a Chaplain in the U.S. Navy. At that time, this was the only way this very fine young man could accomplish his goal. The armed services required that all chaplains have an M.Div. degree in spite of the fact that Muslims and other religious communities do not prepare their clergy in this way. Harold proposed that we help. He served as the student's advisor and arranged a creative course of studies with colleagues at the Islamic College that met the requirements of the M.Div. curriculum.

When I retired from LSTC, a Muslim professor who frequently visited the seminary said, "This is one Christian institution in the city where we Muslims feel safe." I accepted this compliment as a tribute to Harold Vogelaar and his ministry at LSTC. In this time of more frequent contact and, in some places, heightened conflict with Muslim believers, Harold has provide safe places where Christians and Muslims, sometimes together with Jews, can undertake a critical work of our time—building relationships of understanding, respect, and friendship for the sake of the common good.

It is a privilege to contribute this essay in his honor.

Lutherans in dialogue

Intrareligious discussions (those within a religious or spiritual tradition) have moved to the forefront of the global interreligious movement. At the 2004 Parliament of the

World's Religions in Barcelona, Spain, intrareligious programs accounted for one-third of the more than four hundred program offerings. The intrareligious emphasis has been initiated by people who have been engaged in interreligious discussions. As a result of searching, probing interreligious conversations or encounters, participants often feel the need to gather with members of their own religious communities and explore at a deeper level their own tradition in relation to other religions. What does our faith community believe about people of other faiths? What gifts do we have to contribute? What gifts might we receive? What obstacles prevent us from participation in interreligious engagements? What compels us to reach out?

This essay is intended to contribute to the Lutheran intrareligious discussion of questions like these.

Lutherans have proud traditions. They work well for those of us who have been born and bred within the church and for some who come to this expression of the Christian faith by way of transfer from other denominations or conversion from other religions. "Justification by grace through faith" is the heart of this global communion. This organizing principle, identified by Martin Luther from the writings of St. Paul, has centered and defined our tradition around the world and throughout history. This principle frees us for lives of service; it is a clarifying lens to interpret scripture and history. It shapes many of our religious and liturgical practices and is a guide that directs our ethical decisions.

While the word of grace is the precious core of Lutheranism, it is also a central theme of all Christian traditions. It is safe to say that the "doctrine of grace" sets Christianity in general and Lutherans in particular apart from other world religions and spiritual traditions. This is so because the Christian understanding of sin that permeates human life and the whole created order and that requires God's dramatic grace-filled action to redeem and restore the whole creation is alien to virtually all other religions. Jews, for example, do not think of themselves as alienated and separated from God by sin in the same way. They are God's chosen and imbued by nature with a sense of a covenantal connection to God. Islam is rooted in the same Abrahamic soil and sees no need for a savior. Rather, its followers are guided by a meticulous recitation of the Islamic way of life given in the sacred Koran and in the writings about the Prophet's life, even as they prepare for an all-determining final judgment at the end of life.

Eastern religions have a different starting point. Hinduism's beginnings are veiled in the mystic origins of human consciousness. Together with Zoroastrians, Jains, and Buddhists, with their founding teachers and teachings, these ancient religions form a vast repository of wisdom about the nature of life and ways human beings can navigate its pitfalls and perils. Goals differ—the search may be for happiness, escape from suffering, or a path toward a more perfect life. But the Tao (the way) is prescribed by the Gurus of the past and present, and the capacity to follow the way lies within all sentient beings.

Other spiritual traditions, ancient and modem, tend to select strands from the great storehouse of human spiritual wisdom and weave their own distinct design of the way to be in the world.

So the Lutheran focus on justification by grace is a strange notion to most people of other religious and spiritual traditions. Moreover, the perception that human beings are sinful creatures, separated from God, each other, and even themselves and that they need God's grace-filled interven-

tion to be freed and forgiven, is a radically foreign, even repugnant, idea to many.

How then are Lutherans to relate to people of other faiths in this interreligious age? What should our attitude be toward other religions? Should we seek opportunities to be involved in interreligious gatherings and events? What aspects of our Lutheran tradition prepare us for these encounters? How are we to think of our responsibility to people who do not know Christ, do not believe, and are not baptized?

First, any intra-Lutheran discussion of these and other questions about our relationship to people of other religions and spiritual traditions must be grounded in our central affirmation of justification by grace through faith. Many familiar passages and positions flow from a focus on the unconditional love of God as our starting point. The "once for all" nature of God's act in Jesus Christ strongly implies that what happened in Christ has universal implications—for those who know and those who do not know the details of the redemptive drama of the New Testament.

Second, the missiological insights of previous generations are important to this discussion. We affirm that it is the task of Christians to tell the story of Jesus with confidence and that it is the Holy Spirit working in the lives of people who calls, gathers, and enlightens the whole church on earth. Belief, conversion, and salvation are the Spirit's work, not ours. We need to decide how best to be channels for the Spirit, to embody the Spirit in our lives in general and especially in our relations to people of other religions.

Third, our contemporary reality casts the intrareligious discussion in a totally new light. In this globalized world, religions are no longer identified exclusively with a set of countries or a continent. Harvard professor Diana Eck calls this phenomenon the "marbleization" of religions. Just as the colors of a richly textured piece of marble flow in and among each other, so the religions of the world are present to one another as never before. The skylines of our cities today are marked with not only steeples and crosses but also domes and minarets. The religion sections in secular bookstores are a digest of the world's religions, and in some places it may be hard to find a Christian text in the mix. The interreligious movement is a product of this new age and raises the intrareligious questions with new specificity.

> The Christian understanding of sin that permeates human life and the whole created order is alien to virtually all other religions.

Many Christians today are in firsthand contact with people who live by a totally different set of spiritual presuppositions about life. It is challenging to imagine the worldview and the spiritual feelings of a Buddhist, for example, with no concept of an omnipotent God and no reason to turn to God. Likewise, it can be a confusing experience to describe what Christians believe to someone who can scarcely fathom the appeal of a crucified God and is likely to turn glassy-eyed at the story of a resurrection from the dead and an ascension into heaven. Nevertheless, challenging and confusing as these exchanges are, they are real

and are happening today with increasing regularity in interreligious gatherings and in everyday contacts. Minimally, our intra-religious reflections should lead us to welcome the opportunity that these exchanges present simply as a way to meet one of the responsibilities most Christians feel at some level, namely, to tell the Story.

Although the stories of the various religious and spiritual traditions differ widely and have little in common at the conceptual or theological level, many discoveries of deep commonalities are being made at the ethical and spiritual levels. It is not an overstatement to say that *love* is the common ethical principle of all religions and spiritual traditions. Buddhists can affirm the Golden Rule as fully as Lutherans. In most traditions, love is not left an abstract principle but is spelled out in terms of rules or codes of conduct that detail what love means in relation to self, neighbor, other creatures, and the world around us. Indeed, there is much to admire, to inspire, and to marvel at in the ethical wisdom of the world's religions. Many of the derivative expressions of love such as forgiveness and care for the welfare of others are prominent in the practices of other religious traditions. The formulations of these attributes in stories and sayings, poetry and images, may be strange, but common ethical conclusions are readily apparent.

Working from these three dimensions —the centrality of grace, the role of the Spirit, and the interreligious engagements of contemporary life—should free Lutherans and lead us to conclude the following in our relation to people of other faiths:

First, we should take full advantage of this "day that the Lord has made," embracing every opportunity to engage with people of other faiths as, indeed, people of faith. We will quickly find that, at the ethical level, in our commitment to serve the common good and work for a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world, we share much more with people of other faiths than we do with people of little or no faith.

Second, our faithfulness to Christ does not oblige us to covert our neighbors of other faiths. Our understanding that this is the Spirit's work should be real and sufficient. We should, however, take every opportunity in interreligious settings to tell the Story, to make our motivations plain, and to demonstrate, especially by our deeds, that it is our faith that shapes our love.

Third, the once-for-all act of God embedded at the center of Lutheran teaching as the doctrine of justification should equip us to approach our lives in this interreligious age in the confidence that what has happened for us has happened for all human beings and, indeed, for the whole creation.

For these reasons, Lutheran Christians can enter wholeheartedly into discussion, dialogue, common purpose, and common action with people of other faiths. We should learn what they believe, how they live, and what they are motivated to be and become in this life. We will be amazed at how much we share. The revelation of God's grace in Jesus Christ is unique. We should share it with conviction but without contention. Many will admire our story and find strength in it, even if they never come to the font and the table.

And we should prepare to be deepened ourselves. Some of the practices, disciplines, and convictions of others will change us. Prayer, for example, may take on aspects of meditation with more emphasis on adoration and fewer petitions of request. Almost certainly, as we learn more about the depth and greatness that is hidden in the world's religions, our own sense of the awesome mystery of God will be magnified.

Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the United States: A Muslim Perspective

Ghulam-Haider Aasi
American Islamic College
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
Catholic Theological Union, Chicago

A personal journey into interreligious dialogue

Meetings with Christians in Pakistan. My first encounter with Christian ministers and missionaries started in 1972 in Islamabad, Pakistan. Three Protestant missionaries working at a Christian study center at Rawalpindi approached the director of the Islamic Research Institute to exchange their views with Muslim researchers at the IRI on different topics in Islamic studies. These missionaries were working in Islamic studies and doing research on modern Islamic movements. Their initial conversation led to the idea that these Christian missionaries and scholars of Islam would help the younger Muslim researchers of IRI by teaching them certain research methodologies and helping them improve their writing skills in English.

I was one of these younger researchers. I remember very well that we started the discussion with H. A. R. Gibb's *Mohammedanism.* The Christian scholars entertained and responded to some of our objections and most likely gauged our reactions and sensitivities. However, coming from a culture that demands nothing less than deferential respect for one's teachers, we young Muslims were careful to keep the discussion from becoming negative or confrontational. The only thing I remember of this encounter is that our Christian teachers raised many critical questions about the history and development of Islamic law, theology, and thought and challenged us to articulate alternatives to certain traditional Muslim understandings of these issues. One of the three Christian missionary teachers later went on to become a member of the Task Force of Christian-Muslim Relations, inaugurated in 1977, with its headquarters at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut.

An individual who played a significant role in these exchanges, although he was not present for any of them, was an elderly gentlemen, a traditional Muslim scholar: the IRI librarian. He would always be ready to provide us with a "correct" Islamic response to the criticism of Orientalists and would admonish us to be wary of these Western scholars of Islam, in particular the Christian missionaries, whom he saw as "wolves in sheep's clothing." I always respected this librarian, but somehow I could neither intellectually nor temperamentally agree with him. I marveled at his memory as a ready reference to the authors and titles of books. It was this, perhaps, that qualified him to be a librarian without ever studying library science.

This gracious encounter with the three Christian scholars made me ever appreciative of Western scholars of Islam—be they prejudiced, antagonistic, curious, polemical, objective, or sympathetic. I would ever after think that if non-Muslims devoted so much energy, time, effort, and resources to studying and researching Islam, Muslims should be ashamed if they did not study their own religious resources and classics, let alone the resources of other religious traditions. While I knew that I had to approach the perspectives of non-Muslim scholars of Islam with a certain degree of caution, I also knew that it was the zealous "neo-revivalist" movements that were transforming Islam into a revolutionary ideology and invoking the slogan of "Back to the Quran and Sunnah!" that indirectly helped sever the connection between contemporary Muslims and the rich heritage of traditional Muslim scholarship. Although this was never the intention of the leaders of these movements, however, it resulted in such an unfortunate situation.

First dialogue experiences in the U.S.A. In the fall of 1974, I was selected to receive a scholarship for graduate studies in the Department of Religion at Temple University in Philadelphia. Interestingly and coincidentally, one of the courses in which I first enrolled was "Interreligious Dialogue." It was taught by a staunch proponent of interreligious dialogue who popularized the "Decalogue of Dialogue" and even claimed that the survival of humanity depended on the choice between "dialogue or death," a phrase that was to become the title of one of his works. In the course we studied the Roman Catholic Church's directives for interreligious dialogue. Unfortunately, we never fully discussed or analyzed *Nostra Aetate* or any of the other documents of the Second Vatican Council that had to do with dialogue. Indeed, our respected professor tended to focus more on what he considered to be the irrelevance of the traditional religious truth claims of all the major world religions. By comparing competing truth claims he attempted to demonstrate that every religion is merely a product of its own particular historical milieu and cultural context. If memory does not fail, the other Muslim students in this course and I were very disappointed at the course's lack of sensitivity to the value of traditional religious truth claims. We found that the course focused on a gross comparison of beliefs and practices filtered through the lens of a strong relativism. Our professor placed heavy emphasis on the reality of secularism and its contribution to freedom and equality.

The most challenging and enriching course for me was one on the history of the Christian church, taught by a German Pietist scholar whose lectures and critical analysis of the church's councils, formative periods of trinitarian theologies, and passionate discussions of Christology and the writings of early Church fathers would always retain my thirst for understanding and appreciating the most complex of Christian doctrines such as the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and Redemption—the cornerstones of the Christian faith.

Experiencing sincere but opportunistic proselytization. As soon as the foreign students arrived at the university, we started receiving visits from young missionaries accompanied by older missionaries who had worked in Muslim countries. Fully conscious of our homesickness and culture shock, they offered us their hospitality as well as some material assistance. They invited us to their church services, introduced us to young missionary girls, and provided us paperback Bibles and books.

They also were keen to tell us the stories of some Muslims who were fortunate to find their Savior in Jesus Christ. Though some of the older missionaries were very aware of the "stubbornness" of Muslims when it comes to conversion to Christianity, these missionaries were too impatient to let "God guide whoever wills to be guided." They were wont to press for our conversion as soon as possible. Many a time, they would express bafflement at our simple questions about their understanding of Trinity and Incarnation.

Despite all their crude and zealous efforts to "save" us, what struck me the most were the tactics of proselytization about which I had heard in Pakistan but never experienced until I came to the U.S. Although I appreciate their commitment and devotion to their faith and their concern to bring others into the fold of Christianity, I believe that such ways go against the grain of any religious teaching.

Unfortunately, as I would see later in the 1980s, many simplistic Muslims, who had never studied and never fully understood Islam, adopted these same methods and would zealously offer Christians copies of the Qur'an in order to convert them to Islam. Oddly enough, they would use these methods on people who were deeply committed to and theologically trained in their traditions, such as seminarians who would visit mosques as part of the requirements for their courses in global and intercultural ministries. Perhaps, due to my nature and my education as a historian of religions, I am unsympathetic to this sort of committed but overly forceful and impatient faith.

As I continue to investigate the major religions of the world and learn more about them through teaching courses on world religions, I want all the more to drink from their rich and inexhaustible sources. Their sweet fountains of life and meanings and

As I continue to investigate the major religions of the world, I want all the more to drink from their inexhaustible sources.

their precious treasures of jewels and pearls invite me to look into my own faith tradition and find the same there.

Learning from a dynamic mentor's experience. During the mid-1970s to early 1980s, many national and international dialogues were taking place. In some of these high-profile dialogues the late Ismail R. al-Faruqi would be a vocal participant (for example, in Tripoli, Libya, in 1976). I learned a great deal from his personal impressions of the dialogues in which he was involved. I also read his presentations and their critiques by his non-Muslim dialogue partners. At times, some of us would join the audience in those interreligious dialogue meetings and reflect on these in terms of their natures and functions. Similarly, many dialogue meetings took place that were organized by the Task Force for Christian-Muslim Relations of the National Council of Churches.

After the Iranian revolution and hostage crisis, Islam made the radar screen of the U.S. mass media. Many latent stereotypes, misconceptions, and caricatures began appearing as headlines. Paradoxically, such events stimulated more curiosity and interest in Islam than the well-planned,

Islam made the radar screen of the U.S. mass media after the Iranian revolution and hostage crisis.

patient efforts of the Catholic Church, World Council of Churches, or National Council of Churches to engage their parishes and congregations in Christian-Muslim dialogue. Christian leaders working for Christian-Muslim dialogue now started responding to the general uneasiness about Islam and began to engage Muslim religious leaders of Islamic centers and organizations. Until the early 1990s the Christian-Muslim dialogue remained primarily an encounter of Christian and Muslim scholars and leaders of national or international organizations. The meetings taking place between Islamic Centers and Christian parishes and congregations were mostly on the level of certain individuals' personal interests and tended to be oriented toward "mission" or *da'wah* (invitation to Islam).

Throughout this period there were rapid changes in geopolitical conditions, especially with the end of the Cold War. These included the situation in post-Soviet Afghanistan, the Iraq-Iran War, the first Gulf War, and the tragedy of Bosnia. Each of these events in its own way forced many more Muslims to seek refuge in the U.S. At this time, more and more U.S. Americans were becoming wary not just of Islam but also of Muslims. Thus, in the 1990s Muslim organizations felt an increased need to respond to Christian Church leaders' openness for more organized dialogue as well as to seek their help and learn from their experience. This was particularly the case with respect to the Catholic Church and Jewish communities' experiences of being religious and cultural minorities in WASP America.

Returning to the late Dr. al-Faruqi's experience, he was convinced that Muslims should establish their own educational and research institutions in the U.S., institutions that could prepare new generations of American Muslims to learn their own sources authentically and critically and also to act as bridges for mutual understanding between the U.S. and various parts of the Muslim world. Hence, he broke new ground for the Muslim community in the U.S. by his concerted efforts to found the American Islamic College in Chicago in 1983 under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and to found the International Institute of Islamic Thought in Herndon, Virginia, in 1985.

Although his contributions to Christian-Muslim dialogue often have been perceived as polemical and combative (perhaps due to his passionate temper and dynamic personality), his close students and colleagues found in him an ardent believer in the efficacy of Christian-Muslim as well as Christian-Muslim-Jewish trilateral dialogue. Whether or not he was convinced of the sincerity of his Christian dialogue partners (only God knows the conditions of human hearts), he never denied his dialogue partners the benefit of the doubt and always wholeheartedly encouraged Muslims to engage and cooperate in every venture and with every people for the cause of socioeconomic justice and real freedom for all humanity. He was absolutely committed to interreligious dialogue and strongly believed in an honest and free exchange of religious ideas and experiences as well as in the freedom of conscience and religion for every human being. His unshakable

faith in the unity of God (*tawhīd*) and in the equality of all humanity was the basis of his radical commitment to the dignity of every human person.

It was out of his strong belief in these fundamental principles that he tirelessly spoke out against all oppression, whether political, economic, social, cultural, religious, or racial. Long before the Christian scholars of the history of religion (*Religionswissenschaft*) started reflecting on a theology of world religions, Faruqi had proposed the theory of "meta-religion" according to which he argued that the historical development of any religious tradition can be judged according to transhistorical universal principles.[1] He embraced the death of martyrdom, and May God bless him with paradise!

The beginnings of institutional dialogue in Chicago. The American Islamic College in Chicago started its academic program in the fall of 1983, and Dr. Faruqi was its first president. AIC's mission statement highlighted two of its goals: (1) "to provide an education that acquaints students with various fields of learning in the context of the Islamic view of the arts and sciences, nature, man, culture, and civilization" and (2) "to build bridges between Americans and Muslims, to develop mutual scholarly and educational relations and to promote better understanding through education."

As for the first objective, the College started with unrealistically high aspirations and expectations and soon realized that the financial and organizational resources it needed even to obtain accreditation were not available. Despite the lack of necessary financial and organizational resources, it continues its educational programs and activities, though reduced to a skeletal level. With respect to the second objective of its mission, however, it was fortunate to have the moral support and encouraging cooperation of many Chicago-area Christian theological seminaries and church leaders and organizations interested in Christian-Muslim dialogue. The credit, recognition, and appreciation must be given to whom it belongs: Harold Vogelaar, soon to be inaugurated as the first director of Lutheran School of Theology's Center for Christian-Muslim Engagement for Justice and Peace, contacted AIC in the fall of 1984 to start a Christian-Muslim dialogue.

As if many churches and Islamic centers were eagerly awaiting this blessed initiative, within six months (January 1985) the first Christian-Muslim dialogue took place at AIC. LSTC, with its Professors Harold Vogelaar, David Lindberg, and James Scherer, and the American Islamic College, with its faculty and staff, served as the convening institutions for the first Chicago Metropolitan area Christian-Muslim dialogue engaging the representatives of major Christian and Muslim institutions. The two days of conversation and workshops occurred with the strong leadership and participation of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, with its director of ecumenical and interreligious affairs Fr. Tom Baima (now the Provost of the University of St. Mary of the Lake); Catholic Theological Union; McCormick Theological Seminary; Garrett Theological Seminary; the Council of Middle East Churches; the Muslim Community Center, Chicago; the Islamic Cultural Center; the Islamic Foundation; Imam W. D. Muhammad's community of African-American Muslims; and other metropolitan Chicago-area mosques and Islamic centers.

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1. Ismail R. al-Faruqi, "Meta-Religion: Towards a Critical World Theology," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 3, no. 1 (September 1986): 13–57.

The participants were so excited and inspired that they proposed to form what later became the Conference for Improvement of Christian-Muslim Relations (1986–2004). For the following two decades, this Conference continued the Christian-Muslim dialogue in the Chicago area. In particular, LSTC, the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, CTU, the Muslim Community Center, Chicago, and AIC continued their cooperation and consultation in Christian-Muslim relations. The members of these organizations have formed very respectful friendships and enriching and trusting relations in all aspects of their religious learning and experience.

It is very important to note that the ELCA's Division for Global Mission and LSTC started in 1990 to teach courses on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at LSTC. In addition, Dr. Mark Thomsen, ELCA Director of Global Mission during that period, made special efforts to organize crash courses on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations during the summers of 1990–1995 and also urged the ELCA's yearly Global Mission Institutes to arrange workshops and seminars on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations.

These special efforts of ELCA and the interest of LSTC led to an academic program on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at LSTC. LSTC and the American Islamic College started teaching these courses jointly. This was the first such academic program to team-teach courses on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at any theological seminary in the Chicago area. This program has come to fruition in the establishment of the new Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice (CCME) at LSTC.

Besides team-teaching, LSTC and AIC host annual *iftar* (breaking fast during the month of Ramadan) dinners, visit mosques and centers, pray together for victims of terror, war, and political violence, and exchange greetings at feasts, fasts, and condolences at the loss of leaders (such as Joseph Cardinal Bernardin and Pope John Paul II). In addition, these partners in dialogue have been actively participating in the Catholic-Muslim regional dialogues at the national and international level at conferences. CTU has offered academic programs on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations since 2000 with the positive support and appreciation of AIC and the Muslim community in Chicago.

The active and vigorous Christian-Muslim dialogue and relations in the Chicago metropolitan area have not only helped to improve the mutual and respectful understanding between Christian and Muslim faith communities but also have provided the basis for the establishment of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions and indirectly may have encouraged the National Council for Christians and Jews to rename itself as the National Council for Community and Justice.

During each Ramadan since 1996, the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago hosts an annual interfaith *iftar* dinner at which the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago is the keynote speaker. Since 1998, the Islamic Society of North America has held its Interfaith Unity Dinner at its annual convention. Religious leaders of all faiths in the Chicago area, as well as leaders engaged in interfaith dialogue at the national level, are invited and included at this event.

Muslims' approach to Christian-Muslim dialogue in the United States

The history of institutional Christian-Muslim dialogue in Chicago reflects a broader movement throughout the United States.

Muslims in the U.S. are a microcosm of the Muslim *Ummah* (Community) of the world. Whereas the commonality in faith and religious ideals unites them, their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic identities and diverse practices and understandings of Islam have always made them a diverse community. According to a well-known tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (s.), "Difference of opinion in my Ummah is the grace and mercy of God (*rahmah*)." With regard to attitudes toward interreligious dialogue, and Christian-Muslim dialogue in particular, Muslims in the U.S. may be grouped into the following four categories.

1. "Traditionalists." These probably are the majority. Their understanding of Jews and Christians ranges between considering them *ahl-al-kitāb*, the "Peoples of Earlier Revelation," and *kuffār* (pl. of *kāfir*), or "disbelievers." They generally accept the difference in faith with respect, though sometimes with a sense of superiority. More often than not, they remain indifferent to both sociopolitical interactions and interreligious dialogue. Their interaction with neighbors and coworkers of other faiths is generally one of mutual respect, courtesy, and recognition of differences. They will not initiate any discussion in particular about religion or politics, but if approached by others they may present the "Truth of Islam." Generally, they live in their own small ethnocultural mosques, import imams from their home countries, have recently begun to send their children to receive a religious education from *madrasah*s and *jāmi`ah*s (traditional "schools" specifically designed for religious education), and are gradually opening and operating their own such institutions based on very traditional models. They are not impervious to modernity in terms of the adoption of new technology and new means of communication and production; however, they do try their best to safeguard their children and families from the "immoral" programs and pictures of the mass media. They do not subscribe to any animosity or condone any violent reaction or opposition to Western secular institutions in general and to religious Jews and Christians in particular. Their pacifist approach is that of letting everyone live according to his or her beliefs and practices. Their view of *da'wah* is largely aimed at their fellow Muslims, and they strongly believe that in living and practicing "true Islam" they can genuinely give the best "witness" to their faith.

2. "Sufi" groups. These people are usually followers of some Sufi *shaykh*s or *pir*s ("masters"), whether these spiritual leaders belong to some traditional Sufi orders such as the Naqshbandiyah, the Qadiriyah, the Shadhiliyah, and the Tijaniyah or are unaffiliated charismatic individuals. Their focus is on spirituality and on encouraging others to engage in various forms of *dhikr*, rituals of meditation and prayer focusing on the "remembrance" of God. They emphasize the commonality of all religious traditions, in particular of the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Generally they avoid any sort of religious or sociopolitical controversies or conflicts. Their attitude toward Jews and Christians in particular is very positive and conciliatory and focuses on common sources and practices of spirituality. They are of the view that it is through genuine spiritual experiences that the peoples of faith will come to live in peace and harmony. Their approach to *da'wah* is to invite and embrace others in joining their *dhikr* practices with the sincere belief that God will accept the true seekers.

3. "Neo-revivalist activists." Most of the Muslim organizations or individuals

Muslims in the U.S. have begun to recognize interreligious dialogue as an important and effective venue for combating misconceptions and stereotypes.

engaged in formal or organized Christian-Muslim dialogue in the U.S. are of this persuasion. Although this group is not statistically the majority, they are definitely the most well-organized, and their membership includes the most highly educated professionals in the Muslim community. They are vocal and strongly engaged in any number of so-called Muslim causes. Thus they appropriate to themselves the role of representing all of the Muslims in the U.S. The majority of them come from South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, with some indigenous African Americans and white Americans. Most of the leaders and workers in this category are either directly or indirectly influenced in their understanding of Islam by the thought and interpretation of neo-revivalist movements, such as Jama'at-i-Islami of the subcontinent, al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn of the Arabic-speaking world, and the like-minded organizations in other parts of the Muslim world. They believe in Islam as a complete way of life. Gaining substantial financial and educational support from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states from the early 1970s to 2000, they have quite successfully established and monopolized their control over the leadership of the major Islamic centers, charitable organizations, financial and educational institutions, sociopolitical and cultural organizations, and so on. A prime example is the Muslim Students' Association. This organization began as an association of foreign Muslim graduate students in the early 1960s. Since then, it has evolved into the Islamic Society of North America. Leaders of these institutions have support from and contacts with al-Rābitah, the World Muslim League (WML). Many of them were active leaders of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, a Muslim student organization in the Muslim countries and an organ of WML in their home countries. Their approach to *da'wah*, at least until the horrible attacks of September 11, 2001, has been no different than that of the WML but adapted to the circumstances of the particular context. This approach has been well presented and documented during the International Christian-Muslim dialogue held on the subject of mission and *da'wah*.[2]

4. *African American Muslims.* Until the mid-1970s, they were recognized as belonging either to the Nation of Islam or to smaller groups, some of which were mainstream Sunni and others of which exhibited varying degrees of syncretism. After the death of Elijah Muhammad, the Nation of Islam split into three main groups: (1) followers of Imam W. D. Muhammad, who transformed his organization, joining mainstream traditional Islam, now known as "The Mosque Cares"; (2) Louis Farrakhan's group, oscillating between the Nation of Islam ideology and teachings of mainstream

2. *Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah* (Leicester, U.K.: Islamic Foundation, 1982).

Islam, a group still not recognized as fully Islamic by the mainstream; and (3) many small groups who are independent mosques or centers following either African Sufi shaykhs or homegrown African-American Sufi leaders. Among these, Imam Muhammad's following is the largest group and generally represents African American Muslims nationally and internationally. Imam Muhammad, endowed with a peaceful and congenial personality, has always maintained good and positive relations not only with all diverse Muslim organizations but also with Jewish and Christian communities in the U.S. His group's approach to dialogue is always to call upon the partners to work for socioeconomic justice, to help African Americans to gain socioeconomic parity, and to appreciate the African American Muslim contribution to the American experience of Islam.

Challenges

Correcting general misconceptions and deconstructing stereotypes. Muslims of America are fortunate in that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Affairs has been very supportive in helping to correct stereotypes and misunderstandings about Islam in general and American Muslims in particular. It has been in contact with many Muslim organizations sponsoring dialogues and retreats particularly since 1988 under the impassioned leadership of Dr. John Borelli and now continued by Fr. Francis Tiso. Similarly, the World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches' Commissions on Interreligious Dialogue have extended friendships and positive support. Yet, the vocal right-wing Evangelical churches and the media, along with America's complex political and military involvement in the Muslim world and terrorists' attacks, continue to perpetuate negative images of Islam and thereby stimulate Islamophobia in the general public. Muslims have been preoccupied with defending and explaining their innocence and in proclaiming themselves as patriotic and faithful American citizens. Muslims in the U.S. have increasingly begun to recognize interreligious dialogue as an important and effective venue for combating misconceptions and stereotypes.

Disparity in organizational structure and partners in dialogue. Although some Muslim organizations are trying to assert and appropriate for themselves the role of national representative of the entire faith community, there is no hierarchy or organizational structure comparable to that of many Christian denominations. For example, the Archdiocese of Chicago—just one subset of the U.S. Catholic community—has an official director of ecumenical and interreligious affairs. With no centralized hierarchical organization of religious leadership, the Muslim community in Chicago must rely on the leadership of those who volunteer their time and energy in these efforts. Even the international Muslim organizations such as al-Rābitah cannot claim official representation of the Muslim Ummah.

The Muslim religious leaders or scholars who participate in formal Christian-Muslim dialogue meetings cannot claim to represent general Muslim opinion, and, with very few exceptions, they are not scholars or experts on both religious traditions. Jacques Waardenburg describes this disparity in partners of dialogue very aptly:

> If it is already difficult to find Christians able to represent the Christian Churches (with the exception of the Roman Catholic Church) and who have a thorough knowledge of both Christianity and Islam, it seems to be practically impossible at the present time to find one Muslim able to represent the Muslim communities

and who has a thorough knowledge of both Islam and Christianity.[3]

The challenge here for Muslims is not to conform to Roman Catholic standards of hierarchical organization but rather to devise mechanisms of qualified and authoritative religious representation.

Muslims have to come to terms with the fact that there is a disparity between Christians and Muslims, where the former belong to a globally dominant civilization, and the latter belong to one that is dominated. They also must come to terms with the scope of this domination, which operates at a number of different levels, including the sociopolitical, the military, and the economic. As far as they are able, however, they must strive not to allow these facts to intimidate their full and assertive participation in the dialogue.

Disparity in objectives and purposes. Whereas the Christian partners in dialogue tend to be focused on theological issues and matters of religious pluralism (including the welfare of Christian minorities in the Muslim majority countries), the concerns of the Muslim partners are quite different. They involve issues of socioeconomic justice and geopolitical crises that, for Christian dialogue partners, fall into the area of politics rather than religion. Here, the challenge for Muslims is to underscore the religio-moral dimensions of these issues.

Opportunities

The Muslims of America and Europe have a new experience of living in a religiously plural environment. They are being called and helped by Christian majority partners to get rid of their religious-minority complex and to join them in finding religious solutions for a religiously plural world. It is a great opportunity, but will the present situation of Muslims and their lack of financial, organizational, and intellectual resources hamper them from rising to the occasion?

Since the declaration of *Nostra Aetate* at the Second Vatican Council and many sincere and concerted efforts on the sides of both Islam and Christianity, great progress has been made at least on organizational and formal levels to bring Muslims and Christians together. One cannot deny the very perceptive and judicious assessment of Christian-Muslim dialogue made by Waardenburg: "Present day Christian-Muslim dialogues are in the first place a social and cultural rather than a religious phenomenon, even if they are also the product of religious motivations."[4] Nonetheless, many formal dialogues are moving more toward discussing each other's scriptures and other classical theological and spiritual resources.[5]

Another obvious challenge that still faces the sincere practitioners and participants of Christian-Muslim dialogue is how to share their experiences and enrichment with the grassroots and engage every parishioner and believer to be an active partner in the venture to do the will of God together with peoples of different faiths and cultures.

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3. Jacques Waardenburg, *Muslim-Christian Perceptions of Dialogue Today* (Paris: Peters, 2000), 293.

4. Waardenburg, *Muslim-Christian Perceptions of Dialogue Today*, 293.

5. For example, see *Revelation: Catholic and Muslim Perspectives* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006).

Practical and Mystical: Patriarch Kyrillos VI (1959–1971)

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When fifty years from now the history of the Coptic Orthodox Church is revisited, the figure of Patriarch Kyrillos VI, who reigned as Patriarch of the Coptic Church from 1959 to 1971, will stand out as one of its most influential reformers. Copts call him the "last of the traditional patriarchs"; he seldom left his cave, monk's cell, or papal residence and devoted all of his time to praise and prayer. Today the memory of Kyrillos has become somewhat overshadowed by the steady news of miraculous interventions attributed to Kyrillos's intercession after his passing away. In death his influence stretches far beyond Egypt. For example, one of the latest miracles that happened during the fall of 2005 unfolded in Iraq where his miraculous intervention rescued the American husband of a Coptic woman deployed there from certain death.

In this essay I discuss some of the bases for Kyrillos's vision for the Coptic Church that led to the revival movement that continues to this day. By fostering a focus on the life of the Spirit, he rose above the many disputes and distractions around him. In a potentially lethal political climate he stayed aloof from politics. In a time when Muslim extremism affected the Coptic community negatively, Kyrillos reached out to Muslims, fostering strong relationships with the Muslim community and thus modeling a form of interreligious dialogue built on the fruits of the Spirit. During his time the door of the papal residence was always open to all, and many of those frequenting his residence were Muslims. Even today Muslims continue to visit his grave asking for intercession.

Holiness and action

The memories of Kyrillos VI are kept alive by Abuna Rafa'il of the Monastery of St. Menas, who served as his personal deacon. Every year a booklet appears detailing the miracles that occurred through the intercession of the late patriarch. There are now over one hundred volumes in various languages, and the number is growing. Short biographies of Anba Kyrillos have been translated into English and other languages for the second generation of Coptic immigrants. To date we have two works, by Mark Gruber and Brigitte Voile, with chapters that provide a more critical analysis.[1]

This man was a towering personality, not only in charisma but, judging by the size of his house shoes—now on display opposite his grave in the Monastery of St.

1. Mark Gruber, *Sacrifice in the Desert: A Study of an Egyptian Minority through the Prism of Coptic Monasticism* (Lanham, New York, Oxford: University Press of America, 2003), 84–91; Birgitte Voile, *Les Coptes d'Egypte sous Nasser. Sainteté, miracles, apparitions* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2004).

Menas—in physical size as well. He turned the course of the Coptic Church into a story of development and growth when it could just as well have become an inward-looking, dogmatic institution with dwindling membership. Not only did he reform the church, he also initiated a true *nahda*—a revival or renaissance—that today can be witnessed in the church's clerical hierarchy, religious and social life, and cultural expressions.

His accomplishments testify to the fact that Kyrillos was not just a holy man; he was also brilliant in reading the signs and needs of his time. His creativity lay in the fact that he created new spaces for Copts in which they could unfold their identity and practice their faith. His greatness lay in his deep psychological insights and understanding of what constitutes the Coptic identity and how the traditional and ancient Christian faith could translate into renewed forms applicable to the twentieth century. These innate traits, however, might have remained inactive without Kyrillos's charisma that was augmented by his strong life of prayer.

Kyrillos followed a style all his own that combined interest in the smallest detail with teaching in maxims following the great tradition of the desert fathers. For example, he gave advice about the design and length of the uniforms of the active sisters from the Convent of St. Mary in Beni Suef, reasoning that the dress should not touch the ground because that would make the sisters trip when climbing onto a bus. He even thought about the color: beige for novices, grey for sisters—not black, because that would scare children in the sisters' day-care centers. At the same time, he addressed complex issues by example or by giving an apophthegm or a maxim; a "word," resembling the spiritual advice or comment given by the earliest desert fathers. Stories about his method of teaching by example abound. For example, Kyrillos asked the abbot who planned to dismiss one of his monks whom he deemed unfit for the monastic life to send the monk to the patriarchal residence in Cairo. After several weeks of living together, the patriarch found no fault in the monk and had him return to his monastery, and he then presented the abbot with a bill for the monk's room and board for the time spent in Cairo.

Several Copts have written biographies that are now available in many languages. The few writings Kyrillos himself produced are mostly in the form of newsletters and letters. This material is readily available in the book exhibits in churches from Amsterdam to New Brunswick, while the main outlet for Coptic production, the Mahabba bookstore in Cairo, continues to dedicate an entire wall to writings by and about Anba Kyrillos.

Non-Coptic writers such as Gruber, a Benedictine monk, have placed Kyrillos's action in the framework of a planner and designer, while Brigitte Voile has explored every detail about his comings and goings while in the patriarchal position.

In this essay I analyze Kyrillos's methods in bringing about church revival. I look at his vision and how it was applied in practice. His vision entailed a redefinition of church leadership and a redefinition of the Coptic identity that was fully Egyptian yet forged in such a way that it could be carried outside of Egypt's borders and encourage peaceful coexistence with the Muslim population.

A new vision for the church

When on May 10, 1959, Kyrillos became the 112th successor in the See of St. Marc, he ruled a church whose members could potentially become deeply divided. The community was still reeling from the unprecedented events of 1954 when Patriarch

Yusab II had been forced to sign a document of abdication upon accusations of simony. After Yusab's death on November 13, 1956, it took three years and the intervention of President Nasser (in 1957) before the Copts agreed on how and whom to choose as successor.[2]

Since the time of the first modern reformer, Patriarch Kyrillos IV (1854–1861), a rift had grown between the church's lay members and its clerical hierarchy. This rift became visible, for example, when in 1874 the lay council of the Coptic community was established that oversaw the administration of personal status affairs and the management of church property and religious endowments. In 1892 a crisis arose when the well-educated members of the council grew tired of the obstructionist behavior of the ultraconservative patriarch Kyrillos V (1874–1927) who had closed the newly established seminary (1875) and tried to render the lay council's efforts futile. After several months of exile in a desert monastery, the patriarch returned. Understanding that there was no other choice he promptly reopened the seminary.

While at the onset of the twentieth century the rift between educated lay Copts and a largely uneducated church hierarchy grew, by the year 1959 another rift had taken hold of the church. Educational reformation had opened the state schools for Copts from the lower-middle and middle classes as well. This generation, who had started to graduate from university by the early 1950s, had taken up leadership positions within the church, especially serving in Sunday schools. These young adults came partly from the countryside and had priorities and goals in life that differed from those of the Coptic elite. At the same time, the upper-class Copts were hard hit by Nasser's industrial and land reforms that had taken most of their possessions.

Beginning a reign in this confusing landscape was ominous at best. Yet, when asked in an interview about his goal for the Coptic Orthodox Church, Kyrillos answered that he would "pray to God that he would return to the church her original glory with the cooperation of her sincere sons." He did not elaborate during the interview about how he planned to do this, but in his first papal letter he asked that "all sons, brethren, deacons, church members, priests, bishops, metropolitans, members of El-Majlis al-Milli, organizations and community groups; all servants would work in unison and self-denial."[3]

This language was not inclusive; Kyrillos was addressing a male-led, male-oriented church. However, by no means did he mean to exclude women as he encouraged them to move into semi-official positions within the church hierarchy. His essential view of the church was that it should be like a pigeon tower: open for all to fly into. In the tower there is room for all, while nobody (male, female, Coptic and non-Coptic) is sent away empty-handed. Quoting Abuna Rafa'il:

> He never judged or excommunicated anybody; to him love was a virtue that can develop through practice similar to the learning process in school. He was humble; anybody who wanted could meet him but at the same time he guarded himself and used to say "love everyone but keep yourself distant."[4]

Perhaps we could add to this observation that he never excommunicated anybody for long, although there was the famous incident when Father Matta al-Miskin was briefly excommunicated as pun-

2. Voile, *Les Coptes*, 58.

3. Pope Kyrollos VI Sons, ed., *The Fruits of Love: The Saint Pope Kyrollos the Sixth* (Cairo, 1999), 6, 7.

4. Interview, Abuna Rafa'il, Monastery of St. Menas, October 19, 2005.

ishment for being stubborn and refusing to obey Kyrillos's requests.

Hierarchy

The incident with Matta al-Miskin is informative as it shows us that, when challenged, Kyrillos was no pushover but did know to wield power. In 1962 he had the journal *Misr* closed after it waged a campaign against what it considered his lack of reform measures, and in 1965 he asked Nasser to issue a presidential decree that transferred some of the powers of the lay council to the Patriarch.[5]

Before becoming a patriarch, he already had shown sublime skills of putting members of the hierarchy in their place. While still a young monk he derived the authority for his audacity from the fact that he lived the solitary life of a hermit. Having been ordained as the monk Mina in the Monastery of Baramous in 1927, a mere five years later he requested permission to withdraw into the desert. Although permission was not denied, the idea met with great resistance from more senior monks who were aware of the dangers and pitfalls of the solitary lifestyle. Kyrillos managed to deflate their objections and went off into the desert. In fact, most of his monastic career he lived outside the Monastery of Baramous.

Perhaps it was his withdrawal to the desert that kept him unaware of problems brewing inside the monastery. In 1936, returning for the Easter celebrations, he ran into a committee of officials who had been called by the abbot to expel seven monks from the monastery. In retrospect, this event proved formative in Kyrillos's career, as it was the beginning of his "public" career as a solitary that eventually led him to move into the mill on the Muqattam hills just outside Cairo. Affronted by the idea of expelling seven monks during the holy time of Easter, Kyrillos moved from the desert to Old Cairo where he set up a residence with the seven monks. Both the bishop in charge of the monastery and the patriarch summoned him to explain himself. The relatively young monk (34 years old) had no problem rebuking these high-powered figures. When he pointed at the bishop's luxurious robes and living quarters[6] and reminded Patriarch Yu'annis XIX of the fact that expelling the monks had been against monastic law, the prelates had no response.

Although Kyrillos respected the church hierarchy, he was a master in circumventing official decisions he disagreed with—without breaking the rules. For example, in 1944 the Patriarch appointed him abbot of the remote Monastery of St. Samuel, allegedly to move the unruly monk far from Cairo. A few weeks into his new position, Kyrillos passed the daily duties into the hands of a prior and returned to Cairo to be in charge of the Christian student hostel.

Kyrillos pursued his vision for monastic renewal with great determination: by living as a hermit, by his refusal to break the monastic rules, and by living in the mill. Apart from living a rigorous form of the monastic life himself, he kept his eye on the future by gathering a group of young, bright Copts in the student hostel who joined his effort to revive one of the main centers of the early church, the monasteries, as he prepared them for a call into monasticism or the priesthood. One of the novel aspects of his approach was that he included women in his project of renewal. None of these groups fit into the monastic model that existed up to the 1950s.

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5. Voile, *Les Coptes*, 88, 210.

6. Hanna Youssef Ata, *The Life of the Saint Pope Kyrollos the Sixth*. Part I: From Childhood to Ordination, 1902–1959, 2d ed. (St. Menas Monastery, 2002).

While stressing the importance of monasticism, however, Kyrillos's vision of the pigeon tower necessarily included the laity as they provided the voluntary human resources that carried the church in daily life. In order to include them in the church, he reorganized the daily discipline into one that could be followed by everyone.

Daily discipline: Everyone a monk

Like all athletes of Christ who excel in the practice of asceticism and the life of prayer, Kyrillos understood the necessity of a rigorous discipline, not only for the church but especially for its lay members. In order to reach the laity he started to distribute his handwritten comments on the Bible and the teachings of the early fathers in a bulletin called *The Salvation Post*. Teaching intense focus on the sayings of Christ, he stressed that through Christ's message lay people could become vehicles of change just as much as those living the monastic life.[7]

In search of new ways to apply the ancient church teachings, Kyrillos mined the Coptic tradition to find applications that were strict but just. "He was very strict," according to his spiritual son, the late Anba Athanasius, bishop of Beni Suef (d. 2000). Practicing a life of intense prayer himself, he realized that the average lay Copt could benefit from the fruits of the spirit by returning to the biblical practice of participating in the bread and wine as often as possible via the daily liturgy. While in the midst of busy lives, people can make it a habit to attend church, and by participating in the Holy Liturgy they face the day or week with renewed strength.

Returning the heritage

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Copts had discovered a new Egyptian identity as "the sons of the pharaohs." Concurrently, their identity was firmly anchored in early Christian teachings, although most Copts had little knowledge of the roots of their tradition.

Kyrillos realized that true Coptic identity was shaped in the pharaonic-Greco-Roman Byzantine Christian world where a battle between the Christian faith and heretical movements such as Arianism and Gnosticism had been influential in shaping the new faith. Restoring the Coptic collective memory of this era seemed more efficacious to church renewal than stressing the pharaonic roots. Theories from scholars such as Peter Berger, Maurice Halb-wachs, and Hobsbawm and Ranger confirm that the needs of the present help shape socially constructed and collective representations of the past.[8] A reinterpretation of the historic past can never consist of archaeological facts only but also needs to include images—albeit these may be reinvented images—of real beliefs and practices.

In a church that stresses and values the authority of its traditions, this process seems only natural as in the Coptic Church nothing seems to happen in the present that completely escapes "the grip of the past."[9] To imbue the ancient memories, writings, and traditions with the carrying power of the present, Patriarch Kyrillos set out to

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7. Pope Kyrillos VI Sons, ed., *I Am the Way (John 14:6)* (Cairo, 2003), 11, 12.

8. Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Doubleday Anchor Books, [1967] 1990); Maurice Halbswachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983).

9. Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975), 182.

revive the past and infuse it into the needs of the present. For example, celebrating the liturgy daily was based on the models of the early church and became one of the pillars of the current renewal—the New Testament speaks about the early communities of Christians coming together regularly to break the bread and drink the wine. Apart from the biblical practice, he brought back to life the sayings of those who had spent their lives imitating Christ and understanding the word of God: the early desert fathers and mothers. Their words were gathered by his disciples into a handbook, *Bustan al-Ruhban* (the Garden of the Monks), that is now readily available for both monastics and lay people. Recapturing the heritage also included famous events such as the return of the relics of St. Marc, taken to Italy by Venetian merchants in 828 A.D., to the newly built cathedral at Anba Ruwais on June 25, 1968.

In the rest of this essay I focus on three other initiatives where the past was infused into the present: (1) living the monastic life in the public eye, (2) rebuilding the ancient pilgrimage site of St. Menas in Maryoutis near Alexandria, and (3) allowing women to reenter official church activities.

Public monastic

At the time Kyrillos lived the solitary life, he was not the only one considered saintly. One of the famous hermits was Abuna Abd el-Masih el-Habashi, whom Kyrillos met when withdrawing into the desert of Wadi Natroun. Being an Ethiopian, El-Habashi practiced one of the most austere forms of solitary life. Little is known about this person apart from what Otto Meinardus reported about him.[10] But he could relay the secrets of life in solitude and showed that this ancient option of living the monastic life was still possible in the twentieth century. However, few ever saw him, and still fewer actually managed to speak to him. Otto Meinardus tried to retrieve information from this holy person by landing in front of his cave in a small plane. He was greeted by a grumbling hermit who refused to accept his cans of tuna repeating that it was "satan's lure" confronting him here.[11]

Other monks who were considered saintly included Abuna Yustus (1910–1976) in the Monastery of St. Anthony and Abuna Andraus (d. 1988), the blind monk who guarded the Monastery of St. Samuel. Although stories about these monks circulated, they remained hidden away in their monasteries. The time of the mass pilgrimage had not yet started, and few Copts ever traveled to the monasteries.

When in 1936 Kyrillos left his monastery in order to take care of the seven monks who were evicted, the occasion provided a new phase in the life of Abuna Mina al-Mutawahhid (Father Mina the Solitary), as Kyrillos was called at that time. Living in the windmill on the Muqattam hill, just outside Cairo, allowed him to become a "public monastic" who transformed into a saintly figure well known for his strong prayers that brought healing and consolation to the people. As we learn from the works of Peter Brown and others, in the end sainthood is a joint effort in which the saint interacts with the public and thus becomes a model for religion.[12] Recognizing saintly behavior is crucial for the saint's message

10. Otto Meinardus, *Monks and Monasteries of the Egyptian Deserts* (Cairo: A.U.C. Press, 1961).

11. Personal communication with Dr. Otto Meinardus during the 1985 meeting of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), Hamburg, Germany.

12. Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101.

to reach the audience and transform the religious life of his or her day.[13]

To strengthen his spiritual efforts, Kyrillos relied on the teachings of seventh-century Syrian Nestorian ascetic Isaac of Nineveh, who practiced a rigorous spirituality in Iran's southwestern desert. Living in a state of extreme solitude, after escaping the position of Bishop of Mosul (or Nineveh), Isaac wrote a treatise on the perfect Christian that by the ninth century was translated into Arabic, Coptic, and Greek. Isaac was not one of the famous Coptic desert fathers such as St. Anthony or St. Macarius whose writings were widely read in the Coptic Church. Neither had he lived before the time of Islam, as these fathers had. He provided a new model showing that even after the Muslim invasion the church was still vigorous.

More recently, the discovery of relics such as those of the famous Saint Samaan (tenth century) were found in 1992 during excavations at a church in Old Cairo.

By being a public monastic Kyrillos showed that this way of living could be followed by well-educated Copts. He also showed that it was equally feasible for devout Copts to follow a life of the spirit, in spite of the fact that visible models were lacking. Kyrillos showed the heart of religion, and by going public he invited others to follow. Although considered to be a thaumaturge, or miracle worker, observations from that time state that "Nothing was strange about his appearance, about his speech. But what he said conveyed meaning; the man was simple and deep but all natural."[14] Kyrillos did not fly in the air or perform miracles in public; things happened naturally—almost as if they were to be expected.

Practicing his lifestyle in public imitated the way most hermits had lived in the early centuries. They had not been separated from the world but were in constant interaction with visitors who came to seek their advice and blessing. As Coptologist Chrisy Koutsifou has pointed out, some hermits expected to be visited, and some, when leaving their dwelling, left a message behind telling the visitors when they would be back.[15]

As for the miracles, Kyrillos himself invariably referred to Saint Menas, who he believed was the real wonder worker. In an act of double intercession, he asked Menas's help, and both prayed to God. This type of intercession was a step removed from that of the ancient desert saints who could not refer to a favorite saint yet but ascribed their miracles solely to God's working.

St. Menas

Well known are the stories about the relationship between St. Menas and Kyrillos. This bond, strong since his childhood, was expressed in Kyrillos's name as a monk, Abuna Mina. Long before becoming patriarch, Kyrillos had approached Pope Yu'annis XIX with the (denied) request to revive the pilgrimage site of the saint that around the tenth century A.D. had fallen into ruins. Menas was martyred for his Christian faith during the time of Diocletian (reigned 284–305), and his body had been buried near Lake Mareotis between Wadi Natroun and Alexandria. There it had

13. Many examples are given by Aviad M. Kleinberg in *Prophets in Their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992).

14. Bishop Athanasius of Beni Suef, in interviews February 12–13, 1998.

15. Chrisy Koutsifou, "Social and Economic Relations of Monasteries in Byzantine Egypt," Dean Huss Lecture, American University in Cairo, December 8, 2004. This example referred to the hermit Franges (seventh-eighth century).

rested several centuries before his grave became the center of one of the biggest pilgrimage sites in antiquity. Churches were built around it together with guesthouses and baths in which pilgrims could immerse themselves in water that was believed to hold curative powers.

St. Menas was what Voile calls "a complete figure"; he had been soldier, hermit, and martyr, was internationally recognized, was venerated by both Christians and Muslims, and was in fact a national figure referred to by the Egyptian nationalist leader Ahmad Husayn in 1929 as a national hero who had resisted oppressors.[16]

Knowingly or unknowingly, Kyrillos had found the right model of a hero that not only the Copts but also Muslims and non-Egyptians could identify with. Working with the St. Menas Society that in 1945 had been set up in Alexandria to promote visits to the ancient pilgrimage site and pursue publications, Kyrillos's first step as patriarch was to lay the foundation stone for a new monastery at the site.[17]

It was this deed that absolutely baffled outsiders. For example, the American journalist Edward Wakin, who at the time had written one of the few books in English about the Coptic community, observed that the Coptic community "was besieged, the minority anxious, the hierarchy, the clergy and monks in disarray, the church wounded by turmoil, and the Patriarch lays a foundation stone in a deserted place for another monastery."[18]

He and other observers completely missed the brilliance of Kyrillos's move. Reviving the pilgrimage site of a popular yet somewhat inactive saint by building a monastery on that spot served a twofold goal: (1) pilgrimage could be rerouted to the heart of the Coptic faith, and (2) the new pilgrimage took place not too far from Cairo. The monks living in the monastery would study and preserve the texts about the early saints. Monks, being specialists of ritual, tradition, and liturgy, could guide the pilgrims in their journey. The lives of the monks embodied the early martyrs who gave up everything for God and thus provided consolation and encouragement for Coptic believers. At the same time, the monastic lifestyle encouraged lay Copts to emulate the monks' life of prayer and devotion in their homes. Thus they would anchor their children solidly in the Christian faith.[19]

The monks also continued the model of double intercession, made famous by Anba Kyrillos. While Kyrillos had asked for the intercession of St. Menas to carry the pleas of the people to God, the monks now placed the peoples' requests on Kyrillos's grave. Thus the world of the living and the dead had been united into a seamless universe.

The location of the Monastery of St. Menas near Alexandria was superb—not too far and not too near two large cities. Trips there were possible not only for the rich who had cars but also for the average Copt who used public transportation. Especially Copts who had moved to the cities from the countryside missed their annual

16. Voile, *Les Coptes*, 196, 195.

17. For a short introduction to the site see Peter Grossmann, *ABU MINA: A Guide to the Ancient Pilgrimage Center* (Cairo: Fotiadis & Co., 1986).

18. Edward Wakin, *A Lonely Minority: The Modern Story of Egypt's Copts* (New York: William Morrow, 1963), 112.

19. The Coptic model to raise children in an "ecclesial family" was based on the teachings of, among others, John Chrysostom (c. 347–407). See Vigen Guroian, "The Ecclesial Family: John Chrysostom on Parenthood and Children," in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia Bunge (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 61–77.

moulids (festivals for the saints) and *ziarah* (pilgrimages). With the St. Menas site, Kyrillos returned the countryside to them—albeit in a modified version that fit better in his vision for a renewed Coptic Church. This new pilgrimage relied not on folkloristic rituals and beliefs but on the monastic institution and the intercessory powers of the saints.

The entire package of the reinvented pilgrimage also reached out to the growing numbers of young Copts who had enjoyed higher education, had moved to the cities, and were less prone to follow the folklore beliefs of their villages. Moreover, they were eager to serve the church, and pilgrimage provided them with spiritual food and models.

Since Kyrillos's reign many old and dilapidated monastic sites have been rediscovered and restored. Visits to monasteries, holy sites, and *moulids* are more popular than ever.[20] Nowadays these activities have been drawn into the sphere of accepted church activities; the folkloristic elements are fading, while official church teachings have been infused into these visits. Thus they have not only become tools for consolation and encouragement; they also are educational and part of formation into the Coptic faith.

Women

The third point I want to highlight is Anba Kyrillos's attitude toward women. Considering his lifestyle, which relied on celibacy, and the fact that teachings abounded about the dangers of women as temptations, his attitude toward women was extraordinary. He encouraged them to join the official life of the church as much as he encouraged the men. The community of the Sisters of St. Mary in Beni Suef is one example of this new movement. There had not been a community for active nuns in the Coptic Church since the early centuries when female deaconesses had been among the church servants. Kyrillos discussed the new plan with the women and, as already mentioned, even provided detailed advice about their clothing. He also suggested not to be in a hurry but taking time to develop the new active community for women. This turned out to be very wise advice, because the sisters were treading on new ground in an area of service where the demands and needs were overwhelming. Just choosing where to spend the human resources was a challenge, as the community started with only three sisters. Their work now comprises numerous social and medical facilities that serve both Copts and Muslims.

Another remarkable development in the work for women was that the convents for contemplative nuns opened up for new calls. This was the result of appointing Ummina Irini as the superior of Dair Abu Seifain in Old Cairo. She had entered the convent as a semiliterate young girl but possessed the same type of intelligence and visionary powers as Kyrillos did. Although stories now abound about the miraculous cooperation between the convent's patron saint Abu Seifain, or St. Mercurius, and Mother Irini, she was as careful a planner as Kyrillos was. With methodical precision she restored and expanded the abbey in Old Cairo, buying up the surrounding houses and providing the inhabitants with alternative dwellings elsewhere. For the surplus

20. For an analysis of the contemporary Coptic pilgrimage, see: Elizabeth Oram, "In the Footsteps of the Saints: the Monastery of St. Antony, Pilgrimage, and Modern Coptic Identity," in: Elizabeth Bolman (ed.), *Monastic Visions. Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea.* (Cairo: American Research Center in Egypt Inc. and New Haven, CT & London: Yale Univ. Press, 2002) 203-216.

of nuns the convent now has, she built a farm in Sidi Krir, situated on the coastal road between Alexandria and Marsa Matrouh, to which nuns travel to do the agricultural work. Today the convent is part of the pilgrimage circuit and an important place where women can come for advice and consolation. Every Friday it is packed with visitors, and its *moulid* on December 4 attracts thousands who want to hear of the miracles that happened upon St. Mercurius's intercession. Mother Irini is the one relating them, thus carrying on Kyrillos's model of double intercession.

The story of double intercession does not stop at St. Menas and St. Mercurius but must be completed with the intervention of the Virgin Mary, with whom both Kyrillos and Mother Irini had and have strong bonds. She appeared to both of them regularly—so regularly that at times they forgot what the Mother of Jesus had advised them to do. The frequent apparitions of St. Mary in 1968 became one of the most powerful and comforting events for an entire nation reeling from the disastrous six-day war with Israel. After a Muslim mechanic experienced the vision first, it continued to draw crowds for months.

Conclusion: Fruits of the Spirit

The eulogy by Kyrillos's successor Patriarch Shenouda III (1971–) summed up all of the areas in which Kyrillos had made a difference. Looking now at that speech, it turns out to have been a blueprint for action that he himself could follow. Monasteries and convents are overflowing with new members, and daily liturgies are celebrated by one of the many newly ordained priests in churches all over the country and in the West. The Coptic heritage is being studied and preserved. Coptic development projects, such as the ones with the garbage collectors on the Muqattam hill, draw national and international attention, while one of its main initiators, Anba Athanasius, received a national award for his development work in 1998.

Anba Kyrillos is now generally recognized as a saint based on manifold stories about the fruits of his intercession and prayers for people visiting his grave in the Monastery of St. Menas.

His reign as patriarch can be compared with Pope John XXIII, who in 1962 called the Second Vatican Council, or with Gandhi, whose single-minded focus on peaceful resistance changed Indian history. Similar to Gandhi, Kyrillos VI stood at the crossroads of history, from which position he tied together disparate movements and initiatives that, once combined, forged a new Coptic identity, self-representation, and reinvented tradition. When he died, Copts felt protected: although—due to President Nasser's land reforms—they had lost much of their material wealth, their patriarch's deep devotion had been accompanied by great spiritual events such as the frequent apparitions of the Virgin Mary and miracles of intercession and healing. Their church's glory was restored and strengthened with the return of St. Mark's relics. The patriarch was on good terms with the President who had contributed to the construction of the St. Mark cathedral. Both Copts and Muslims missed him sorely.

Of course, in the end his religious persona and lifestyle form the true basis of his actions and the love and respect he inspired in both Muslims and Christians. Kyrillos was a saintly person. Saints have a single focus: to please God and find God's will. It was this focus that became transformed into a glorious vision for the Coptic Church and for the whole of Egyptian society.

A version of this essay was presented as a lecture at the American University of Cairo on November 30, 2005.

Harold Vogelaar: His Legacy and the Challenge of CCME

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What we owe Harold Vogelaar

I first met Harold Vogelaar in the spring of 1984 at a conference of Lutheran missionaries held at Larnaca, Cyprus. It was an annual gathering of LCA missionaries serving in the Middle East in various ministry capacities, particularly in Egypt, the West Bank, and Jerusalem. Historically, Lutherans were not significantly involved in this area except in support of Lutheran World Federation involvements in Jerusalem, in educational and development projects in what was then known as "Occupied Jordan," and in the management of the Augusta Victoria Hospital on the Mount of Olives. Lutherans had supported the Henry Martyn Institute in Hyderabad, India, and Islam in Africa (IAP) projects in several African countries, but there was no major Lutheran involvement in the Arab world. I was eager to learn more about this new LCA area of concentration, its genesis, scope, and prospects.

At Larnaca, Cyprus, I learned that the new LCA Middle Eastern mission venture was decidedly ecumenical in nature. The deployment of Lutheran missionaries and the determination of their fields of service had been closely planned by, and coordinated with, the Middle East Christian Council (MECC), whose Director, Gabi Habib, was present at the conference. MECC had played a key role in devising this new Middle Eastern mission strategy. The LCA contribution was also unique in that it included a significant number of non-Lutheran missionaries, among them Harold Vogelaar and his wife, Neva, who were being loaned to the LCA Division for World Mission and Ecumenism (DWME) by the mission board of the Reformed Church of America (RCA), a church with a long and historical relationship with the Muslim world. These "lend-lease" Reformed missionaries were now supported by the LCA and received their assignments from the LCA mission board while maintaining their relationships with the RCA. This novel arrangement, worked out by the farsighted Southern Asia area director for the LCA-DWME, the late J. Frederick Neudoerffer, allowed Lutherans to become engaged in Middle East ministries much sooner than would have been the case had the LCA been obliged to begin from scratch.

Leaving Cyprus and travelling first to Jerusalem and then to Cairo, I once again ran into the Vogelaars, who for a part of our stay in Egypt served as hosts for my wife and me. I had received a fairly good academic introduction to the teachings and practices of Islam from my graduate studies at Columbia University, but now Harold

helped me gain a firsthand ground-level view of the world of Islam as it was on display in Cairo. Harold had performed a similar role as guide and mentor for many other church- or mission-related visitors who came to Cairo in search of an in-depth experience. He arranged and led short-term study seminars for groups coming from Africa and Southern Asia. This was the education and training component of the new LCA mission strategy. I accompanied Harold on a memorable visit to Al Azhar University, one of the world's most prestigious Islamic institutions, where we witnessed young boys reciting the Qur'an from memory in competition for a prize and as a noble achievement. On visits to several other mosques Harold carefully coached me and explained the differences between various Islamic schools and sects. Under his tutelage our visit to Cairo enabled my wife and myself to enter into the world of Islam at a depth not previously available to us or to the average tourist.

In the fall of 1984 the Vogelaars came to the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago under the auspices of the LCA Division for World Mission and Ecumenism to begin a new experiment. Harold and Neva's assignment was to develop a program to explore the "interface" between Christianity and Islam in America. The base for this activity was to be LSTC, but its scope was not narrowly defined. In time, Harold would be appointed adjunct professor of Islamic studies at LSTC, but his original assignment had always been to explore and develop the "interface" (I often wondered what that term meant) between the two Abrahamic faiths—between the Muslim and Christian communities and between church and mosque.

Quietly but methodically, Harold went about the task of identifying and making contact with various elements of the scattered Islamic community in greater Chicago, which turned out to be fairly complex and diversified. With his excellent command of Arabic, his long experience in the Middle East, and his manifest love for Islamic people, Harold quickly gained the confidence of local Muslim leaders and was welcomed into their circles. Neva was a great asset in dealing with Muslim women, especially American women who had married Muslim husbands.

I traveled with Harold to the American Islamic College (AIC) in Chicago for celebratory events as well as to the Elijah Mohammed Mosque (Nation of Islam), the Bridgeview Mosque (Arab and Middle Eastern), the Northfield Mosque (Bosnian), the Islamic Cultural Center (Pakistani) and several other venues. Out of these visits came the formation of a new Council for Improved Muslim-Christian Relations (CIMCR), which sought to create and expand Muslim-Christian relationships by offering seminars, jointly staffed by Christian and Muslim scholars, to Christian congregations and to other religious institutions. CIMCR meetings alternated between LSTC and the American Islamic College. One of the most valuable fruits of these relationships was the invitation given to Professor Ghulam-Haider Aasi, distinguished Pakistani religious scholar at the American Islamic College, to teach in the program of Islamic studies that later became part of the LSTC curriculum under Harold's leadership. Pastors from African churches seeking to develop a similar "interface" between Christianity and Islam in their own countries came to LSTC to pursue special M.A. programs. A Muslim chaplaincy candidate for the U.S. Armed Forces spent time at LSTC to qualify for his commission.

More recently, a dozen or more Turkish scholars of Islam have come to Chicago to study at LSTC and McCormick Theo-

logical Seminary in M.A.–level programs under grants from the Niagara Foundation. In 2005 the Niagara Foundation in collaboration with generous donors and with LSTC announced a bold initiative to establish a Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice (CCME) at LSTC to open in the fall of 2006 with Harold Vogelaar as its founding director. Also part of the Niagara Foundation grant was the announcement of the establishment of an endowed chair in Christian-Muslim studies and relationships at LSTC. This will be filled in the fall of 2006 by Dr. Mark Swanson, currently at Luther Seminary and previously an ELCA missionary in Egypt.

This expansion of the LSTC program and curriculum to meet the pastoral and theological needs of American and overseas churches has unmistakably redefined the overall mission of LSTC within theological education. At present it is not possible to predict the ways in which these developments will alter present relationships or create new opportunities, academic or other. But it is without question a tribute to Harold Vogelaar's vision and represents the further flowering over twenty years of his original assignment to explore the interface between Christianity and Islam.

What prompted Harold Vogelaar and other RCA missionaries who became part of the Lutheran (ELCA) Middle East missionary effort to devote their lives to working with Muslim people? It is impossible to answer this question without referring to the life and legacy of Samuel M. Zwemer (1867–1952), the legendary American "apostle to Islam," who spent thirty-eight years as a Reformed missionary in Egypt and Arabia. Zwemer tirelessly promoted Christian work among Muslims by writing, teaching, lecturing, and recruiting missionaries for work in the Muslim world. He was the founding editor of the journal *Moslem World*, organized two major international conferences on Christian work among Muslims, and was a leader and promoter of the Student Volunteer Missionary Movement.

In Zwemer's day, direct missionary work among Muslims was seen as a difficult and unrewarding task, generally to be avoided. Congregational, Presbyterian, and Anglican missions in the Near East preferred to work with ancient Christian minority churches dispersed in the Muslim world, such as the Coptic and Syrian communities, seeking to bring about their renewal and to reform them along lines of the American Protestant vision. Zwemer and a Reformed colleague set out to change that strategy by first organizing the American Arabian Mission for direct work among Muslims and then persuading the Reformed Church of America to take over its sponsorship. Dozens of future Reformed missionary candidates—as Sunday school students, teenagers, or student missionary volunteers in college or seminary—came under the spellbinding influence of the peripatetic Zwemer and offered themselves for missionary service in the Muslim world. This was also true of Harold Vogelaar. Through him some of Zwemer's charisma as the original "apostle to Islam" rubbed off on the Lutherans who previously had shown little interest in the Muslim world and only tardily come to adopt Zwemer's vision. Now, thanks to an "apostolic succession" of Reformed missionaries, Lutherans find themselves in the forefront of Christian bodies devoting major resources to engagement with Muslims.

Missiological reflections on the task of the new Center

Some missiological reflections on the project conceived and advanced by Harold Vogelaar over a twenty-year period and

culminating in the inauguration of the CCME are in order. What exactly is the project? Is it "mission" in the usual sense? Is it an expression of "interfaith dialogue" as we have come to know it? Or is it a kind of hybrid venture—similar but new and different from both? What is its rationale, what are its goals, and how are we to evaluate it?

In my judgment, the project to bring about an interface between Christianity and Islam does not conform to the classic definition of the global mission of the church. The mission given by Jesus to the apostles includes the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom, the call for repentance and conversion, the baptism of believers, and their incorporation into the church, which is Christ's body. Those practicing Christian mission among Muslims in the past thirteen centuries have long recognized that Muslims can not be evangelized in the same way that medieval Europe, the Americas, Africa south of Sahara, and the islands of the Pacific were christianized, whether under the auspices of colonialism or by voluntary mission groups. Islam's historic resistance to Christianity, based on its own theology of supersession, its disastrous experiences and memories from the epoch of the Crusades, and its imposition of *shari'ah* (religious law) have made conversion to Christianity and baptism in the name of the Triune God illegal and punishable by death or ostracism. This remains true even in predominantly Muslim countries with a secular constitution that guarantees religious freedom, including freedom to change one's religious beliefs. These facts compelled Zwemer and other advocates of mission to Muslims to modify their goals and to develop an alternative approach—mainly through schools, medical activities, and "indirect evangelism." Countless Muslims came under the influence of Christianity and were attracted to the person and teachings of Christ, but they could not "convert." As noted earlier, converts to Christianity in Muslim lands were nearly always disaffected members of ancient Eastern churches, more precisely proselytes rather than genuine converts.

A second observation is that the project really cannot be considered an expression of "interfaith (or interreligious) dialogue" as defined in ecumenical and Roman Catholic documents over the past thirty years—at least not at present or as presently conceived. Interfaith dialogue in the ecumenical sense assumes that participants are permitted to share their deepest convictions and that their partners are obliged to take them seriously, even at the risk of changing or modifying their own previous understandings of the partner's position. Christians enter the dialogue with a commitment to Jesus Christ and find an opportunity for authentic witness within the dialogue process. Clearly there is tension between dialogue and witness, and neither can be compromised for the sake of the other. The outcome of the exchange is never predictable. A Christian might convert to Buddhism or a Buddhist to Christianity. There are no holds barred, and the outcome depends on the subtle interplay of faith, conscience, and reason in the ongoing dialogue. The principle of religious freedom, including freedom to hold and express one's religious beliefs and practices, freedom to change one's beliefs if motivated by conscience, and the absence of pressure or coercion, is fundamental to any engagement in interfaith dialogue.

The question that must be raised is whether Islam is ready for this kind of dialogical engagement. The CCME promises to focus on common concerns "for peace and justice." That is an entirely worthy goal, but will the Center also deal

with issues of religious truth and revelation, or will these be treated as off limits in the mutual engagement process? An argument can be made that the task of developing the *interface* between Christianity and Islam over the past twenty years, including academic study programs and activities of CIMCR, has worked to the enormous benefit of the growing Islamic community in America. Islam has been offered hospitality, welcomed to America, and shown a friendly face. Muslims have been given public recognition and de facto legitimacy on their way to becoming an accepted part of the American multireligious scene. Hostility and suspicion directed toward Muslims triggered by 9/11 has been at least partially abated through the support of friendly Christian groups. Services rendered by LSTC and mainline religious bodies have not gone unrecognized or unappreciated by Muslims. They are evidence of friendly support and acceptance in the midst of a prevailing hostility or atmosphere of exclusion. But they do not begin to approach the demands and requirements of interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Will the Center have the courage to go further and to explore deeper questions of faith?

Muslims have championed the infallibility of the Qur'an and the uniqueness of the Prophet Muhammad. They are convinced that the revelation given to Muslims through the Qur'an and the Prophet supersedes the biblical revelation given to Christians through Christ and the apostles, just as Christians believe that the truths of Christianity contained in the gospel supersede God's revelation given to Moses and the Jewish people in the Torah. Muslims firmly believe in and ardently strive for the conversion of non-Muslims, especially Christians. For a Muslim to become a Christian —to convert from a "superior" to an "inferior" religion—is strictly forbidden, makes no religious sense whatever, and is punishable by death or banishment. For the Muslim, interfaith dialogue from the outset excludes the possibility of conversion, sets limits on personal religious freedom, and operates solely for the advancement and triumph of Islam. For this reason, whereas we see hundreds of Christian converts to Islam (especially Christian women married to Muslim husbands), we almost never witness a Muslim convert to Christianity, unless in secret. Will the time come when a former Muslim can be openly and publicly welcomed by baptism into the body of Christ?

For the Muslim, interfaith dialogue from the outset excludes the possibility of conversion and operates solely for the advancement and triumph of Islam.

A host of related religious and theological issues must be faced if the activity of the Center is to advance beyond cooperation for peace and justice. These have to do with the nature of revelation (scripture) and the identity and person of the Prophet. Is serious dialogue even thinkable between unwavering fundamentalists and believers accustomed to a more self-critical attitude in matters of faith? Will Muslims allow the

Holy Qur'an to be examined and criticized, using methods and principles of historical and literary criticism, as Christians have for decades examined the texts of the Old and New Testaments in seminary and university classrooms? Will Muslims view such a process as the desecration and dishonoring of their infallible holy book? Similarly, will Muslims allow the person, career, and mission of the Prophet to be examined in accordance with rules of historical criticism and source analysis, as Western scholars have for more than a century done with the life and mission of Jesus? Or will such treatment appear to them a repudiation of the identity and God-given mission of the Prophet? The Muslim picture of Jesus, in some ways similar but in more ways different from the Christian view, can hardly be excluded from dialogue. All such issues cannot be avoided in interfaith dialogue that seeks the truth of divine revelation, though they may be temporarily set aside in the common engagement for peace and justice. Still other issues that must be on the dialogue agenda are the status of women, family relationships, religious law (*shari'ah*), human rights, and the separation of church (mosque) and state.

Yet interfaith dialogue cannot be seen as a one-sided process or a one-way movement in which Muslims are asked to make major concessions to Western religious concepts or methods of scholarly investigation before the dialogue can begin. The average Christian (as opposed to the religious scholar) is not, by and large, ready or prepared for the discipline of interfaith dialogue. Most Christians until quite recently were ignorant of the history, teachings, and practices of Islam. Set this alongside the fact that mainline Christianity, apart from Evangelicalism, is in a state of long-term decline, and the picture becomes even more clouded. Critical observations about the decline of Western Christianity point to such evidence as declining church attendance, neglect of the sacraments and confirmation instruction, consumer lifestyles, growth of theological relativism, and the loss of missionary spirit and of the public influence of Christianity. A Western church lacking in theological clarity and biblical awareness, deprived of missionary intentionality, and struggling to regain its identity can hardly serve as a dialogue partner with a Muslim community newly reenergized by recent events, determined to restore the lost grandeur of Islam, and strongly motivated to engage in spiritual *jihad* (holy war) wherever its message has not been heard or accepted.

This suggests that one urgent aspect of the Center's work must be to recall Christians to their historic role as committed disciples of Christ, serious students of the prophetic and apostolic faith as attested by the Scriptures, defenders of Christian tradition, and advocates for the Great Commission. The Center must therefore also prepare Christians, both professional leaders and ordinary lay priests, for their engagement with Islam. Unquestionably, the Center cannot play the role of a Trojan horse, advancing the case for Islam while further hastening the decline of the Christian community. The Center's aim must be to level the playing field so that both participating teams, Muslim and Christian, can faithfully represent the best of their own traditions. This approach should apply not only to the interreligious engagement for peace and justice but equally to the search for revealed truth.

Created by God, Blessed with a Sacred Trust: Some Biblical and Qur'anic Perspectives on Humanity

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I am grateful for the invitation to contribute to this Festschrift celebrating the achievements of Harold Vogelaar. I have known Harold for thirty years, going back to my seminary intern year, which I spent in Cairo, Egypt, serving at St. Andrew's United Church of Cairo and the Maadi Community Church. Harold was the pastor of both churches and my supervisor. In addition to overseeing my work in the churches, he initiated me into the world of Islam, and I continue to look upon him as one of my mentors. It has been a delight to work with him again the past few years at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and watch LSTC's new Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice begin to take shape under his leadership. It promises to be an exciting venture.

I have been pondering the subject matter of this essay for some years. I believe it is a topic on which Christians and Muslims can engage in fruitful conversation. The Bible and the Qur'ān relate certain views not only of God but also of humanity. As with their respective views of God, so also with the way they picture humanity, there are both convergences and divergences. For the most part, this essay is concerned with convergences.

First, a few comments about the creation. In the twenty-first century, any talk about creation is meaningless unless we at least consider scientific theories about the origin of our universe. It has been observed that our universe is expanding. How do scientists account for this? There is what is commonly known as the Big Bang theory, which says that our universe started with an explosion some ten to twenty billion years ago of an immensely dense mass, and this explosion has propelled everything outward. Another theory speaks of an oscillating universe—a universe in the process of continuous expansion and contraction.[1]

I do not detail such theories here but want to note several points about them. First, they describe the origin of our universe without mentioning God, because the subject of God is beyond the purview of scientific inquiry. Second, both theories start with a given (mass or matter) and proceed from that starting point to describe the possible development of our universe;

1. See Hans Schwarz, *Our Cosmic Journey: Christian Anthropology in the Light of Current Trends in the Sciences, Philosophy and Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 33–48.

they do not go back beyond that given, as we find, for instance, in the idea of creation out of nothing. Third, although these theories all contain a degree of plausibility, they are not facts. They begin with observable phenomena that science has discovered and make a proposal to account for these phenomena. With the discovery of new phenomena, the theories may change.

God as creator

The Bible begins with an account of creation. Historically, however, the first great affirmation in the Judeo-Christian tradition was not that God created the world.[2] We see in the Old Testament that the essence of Israel's faith

> is the firm conviction that God has saved the fathers and mothers from Egypt, led them through the desert and settled them in the land of Canaan. They have only become a people because of God's intervention. What is more, God has made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai, and this covenant determines their entire subsequent history.[3]

The people of Israel believed they had a special relationship with God founded upon these particular events. The creation story flows out of that conviction. Its purpose is not to explain how the world began but to express the conviction that the God who saved the people of Israel also created the world and continues to care for it and them. As Walter Brueggemann says, the creation narrative is "not a scientific description but a theological affirmation."[4]

The New Testament writers also affirm that the creation owes its existence to God. There we are told that God "created all things" (Eph 3:9)[5] and "calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom 4:27). Indeed, we read that God's act of creation is not simply an event of the past; God is also creating the world anew (2 Cor 5:17).

The Qur'ān does not contain a creation narrative, but in numerous verses it declares that God is the creator and source of all things. For instance:

> Surely, your Lord is God, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then ascended the throne. He covers the night with the day, which it follows quickly. He has made the sun, the moon, and the stars subservient by His command. Truly, His are the creation and the command. Blessed be God, the Lord of all being. (Q. 7:54; see also 24:45; 13:2–3; 16:3–16)[6]

The Bible and the Qur'ān share a conviction that the whole of creation owes its existence to God. My principal concern in this essay, however, is not the creation in general. Rather, it is one part of the creation, namely, humanity.

The biblical account of the creation of humanity

First, let us look at Genesis 1:24–31.

> And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.
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> Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let

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2. As Schwarz says, "Both in the Old and in the New Testament, however, God is first introduced to us as redeemer and then as creator" (*Our Cosmic Journey*, 137).

3. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 17.

4. Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 25.

5. Biblical references are to the New Revised Standard Version.

6. Qur'ān references are based on the standard Egyptian system of verse numbering. The translations are my own.

them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and 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." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

This passage describes the moment God "designed" humanity. It is, therefore, the moment God tells us what God has in mind for us. It provides a vision of what God intended us to be.

One of the first things we notice is that we are creatures. In v. 27 we hear three times that God *created* humanity, as if to emphasize that humans are only creatures of God and not on the same level as God. We also see how closely humans are associated with animals. There is no special day reserved for the creation of humanity. Animals and humans are created on the same day. It seems that the Bible is well aware that we, like animals, are controlled by instincts and urges, needs and desires. The Bible sees us as higher animals, as possessors of conscience and reason, but, as Psalm 49 says, like the animals we perish (v. 12). Clearly, we are less than God.

So, before we rightly note that we are the crown of creation, we must first recognize that we are only creatures and not gods. This theme of the great distinction between God and humanity is also stressed in Islam; in fact, there the difference is even more strongly emphasized.

Before we turn to look at what the Qur'ān says about the creation of humanity, however, we should read the second Genesis account of humanity's creation, Genesis 2:4b–8, 18–23.

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. . . .

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken."

Qur'anic references to the creation of humanity

Now we turn to some of the Qur'anic passages concerning the creation of humanity.

[God speaking] We created humanity, a product of clay. Then We placed him as a drop in a secure place. Then We fashioned the drop into a lump of clotted blood, the lump of clotted blood We fashioned into tissue, the tissue We fashioned into bone, and We clothed the bone

with flesh. Thus We produced another creature. Blessed be God, the finest Creator! (Q. 23:12–14)

[God] created all things well, and He began the creation of humanity from clay. (Q. 32:7)

He created humanity from a drop [of fluid]. (Q. 16:4)

He [humanity] was created from a gushing fluid coming forth from between the loins and the breast. (Q. 86:6–7)

We created humanity from a mixed drop.[7] (Q. 76:2; see also 32:8; 56:57–59)

He it is who created you [pl.] from dust, then a drop [of fluid], then a clot, and brings you [pl.] forth as a child. (Q. 40:67)

This last passage puts in sequence what we find in the earlier ones: dust, a drop (of sperm or a mixture of fluid from the male and the female), clot, child. Here it seems that the Qur'ān witnesses that God's work of human creation continues in the human reproductive act, the growth of the fetus, and its entrance into the world as a child.

Other passages picture God as a potter and the giver of life and various human faculties:

He created humanity from clay like the potter. (Q. 55:14)

He it is who produced you [pl.] and appointed for you [pl.] hearing, sight, and hearts (Q. 67:23).

God created humanity male and female.
Was he [humanity] not a drop of sperm emitted?
Then it was a blood-clot, created and formed.
Then He made of it a pair, the male and the female. (Q. 75:37-39)

As God created fruits and hills in various colors, so God created humanity in different colors (Q. 35:28), and God causes humans to multiply in the earth (Q. 67:24).

Our administrative task

Both the Bible and the Qur'ān see a close relationship between humanity and the rest of the creation, but they also see a distinction. One way the Qur'ān expresses this is by saying that God fashioned Adam from clay and then breathed his spirit into Adam.

Then He fashioned and breathed into him of His spirit. (Q. 32:9; also 15:29; 38:72)

The Bible expresses the distinctiveness of humanity a little differently, saying that God fashioned Adam from the dust of the earth, then breathed into Adam the breath of life (Gen 2:7). However, this does not distinguish Adam from the animals, because Genesis also speaks of animals as having the breath of life in them (Gen 1:30). In Genesis what sets humanity above the rest of the creation is that humanity has been created in "the image of God" (Gen 1:26–27). What does this mean? It does not refer just to characteristics we regard as specifically human, such as our ability to reason and make moral decisions. Nor does it mean that humans are a replica of God. In fact, the Genesis account seems uninterested in defining what the image of God means. Instead, it emphasizes the *purpose* for which the image is given.[8] When God created humans, God gave them a special position within the creation.

God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every breathing thing that moves upon the earth. . . ."

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. . . .

. . . out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the

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7. This could refer to the male sperm or a mixture of the sperm of the male with an emission from the female genitalia (Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, s.v. *mashīj*).

8. Schwarz, *Our Cosmic Journey*, 158; Hans Schwarz, *Responsible Faith: Christian Theology in the Light of 20th-Century Questions* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 128.

air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. (Gen 1:28; 2:15, 19)

The special position is that humans are to have dominion over the animals, subdue the earth, till the earth and bring forth produce, and name the animals.

Perhaps we can understand more clearly how humans function in God's image when we consider the ancient Middle Eastern custom of erecting images of earthly rulers. When a picture or statue of a king was set up, it indicated that the area in which it was erected was under the king's dominion. Drawing a parallel here, if humans are introduced into God's creation as being God's image, this may mean that humanity symbolizes and exercises God's dominion over the earth. Human dominion over the world should remind everyone that God is in control of the creation and that we exercise authority on God's behalf.[9]

Brueggemann compares this task of dominion to the work of a shepherd

> who cares for, tends, and feeds the animals... the task of "dominion" does not have to do with exploitation and abuse. It has to do with securing the well-being of every other creature and bringing the promise of each to full fruition.[10]

This could be contrasted, says Brueggemann, with the caricature of the human shepherds described in Ezekiel 34, who abused the responsibility given them by the creator.

> The word of the Lord came to me: Mortal, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel: prophesy, and say to them—to the shepherds: Thus says the Lord God: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and scattered, they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with no one to search or seek for them. (Ezek 34:1–6)

A Christian understanding of dominion must be understood in the light of the way of Jesus, who said "whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all" (Mark 10: 43–44). The one who rules properly is one who serves. To exercise lordship means to be a servant. The shepherd's task is not to control but to lay down his/her life for the sheep (John 10:11). Human beings are given dominion over the creation for its benefit and well-being.[11]

Genesis 1:26–29 helps us understand both God and humankind in new ways. "The creator is 'humanized'[12] as the one who cares in costly ways for the world. The creature is seen as the one who is entrusted with power and authority to rule."[13] We have here a picture of God as one who rules not from on high by decree but by gracious self-giving. We have a picture of humanity not as slaves of God "but agents of God to whom much is given and from whom much is expected."[14]

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9. Schwarz, *Our Cosmic Journey*, 158–59, and *Responsible Faith*, 129; see also Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 60, and Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 32.

10. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 32.

11. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 32–33.

12. Muslims are uncomfortable with using such language about God.

13. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 33.

14. Ibid.

What kind of people can fulfill this function? Is it only those who have a special gift for exercising authority? In Genesis the idea of dominion is always expressed in the plural: "let *them* have dominion" (Gen 1:26, 28). The focus is not on exceptional, specially gifted people but on the human community, and this clearly means both male and female in mutuality and complementarity. The whole human community is entrusted with the task of serving as God's administrator.[15]

In Genesis the idea of dominion is always expressed in the plural.

The Qur'an also speaks of the administrative task humanity has under God over the creation.

> And your [s.] Lord said to the angels: "I am placing in the earth a *khalīfa*." They replied: "Are You going to place in it one who will cause corruption and shed blood, while we sing Your praise and cry 'Holy' before You?"
>
> He [God] said, "I know what you do not know."
>
> He taught Adam all the names, then presented them to the angels, saying: "Tell Me the names of these, if you speak truly." They replied, "Glory be to You. We only know what You have taught us. You are the All-knowing, the All-wise."
>
> He said, "Adam, tell them their names." And when he told them their names, He said, "Did I not tell you that I know the unseen things of the heavens and the earth? And I know what you disclose and what you have concealed."
>
> When We said to the angels, "Prostrate yourselves before Adam," they fell prostrate, except Iblīs. He refused. He was arrogant, and so became an unbeliever. (Q. 2:30–34)

This passage pictures God as saying to the angels, "I am placing in the earth a *khalīfa*." This word can be translated as "vicegerent," "vice-regent," "viceroy," or "deputy." The *khalīfa* is one who exercises authority on behalf of another. The medieval commentator Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373) argued that the word *khalīfa* refers not only to Adam but also to his descendants, that is, the whole human community, basing his argument on the angels' protest, "Are You going to place in it one who will cause corruption and shed blood?" Another medieval commentator, al-Razī (d. 1209), argued the same point differently, by referring to another Qur'anic verse where one of the plural forms of the word *khalīfa* is used: "It is He who has appointed you (pl.) as *khalā'if* (vicegerents/vice-regents/deputies) in the earth" (Q. 6:165).[16] He could also have pointed to Q. 35:39, "He it is who made you (pl.) *khalā'if* in the earth." Thus, as in the Bible, so in the Qur'ān this sacred task is given to the whole human community.

The angels know what a great privilege is being given to humanity, and they express concern about this announcement. They draw attention to their own peaceful character and perpetual adoration in contrast to the corrupt and violent character of humanity. God's response is that he has a surer, deeper knowledge. God then teaches Adam the names of things; the Genesis account simply says that Adam named the animals (Gen 1:20). In both places this should be understood in the light of its Semitic background. It is an image of sovereignty: to be able to name means to have control over something.[17] Adam's

15. Schwarz, *Our Cosmic Journey*, 159–60; *Responsible Faith*, 129–31.

16. Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*, vol. 1 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 76–77.

17. von Rad, *Genesis*, 83.

ability to identify and name is something the angels confess they cannot do.

Then God instructs the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam. The verb here (*sajada*) is the same verb used for the proper human recognition of God. This suggests that God's lordship itself is in some sense at stake in the human role, that the proper recognition of humanity's primacy in the creation is an acknowledgment of God's primacy over the whole creation.[18]

The refusal of Iblīs (the devil) to bow before Adam is seen as an act of defiance against God. By rejecting the status of humanity, Iblīs questions God's wisdom and challenges God's authority. Perhaps we can say this means that God is defied and mocked whenever humanity is despised.[19]

A couple of other Qur'anic verses speak of how God has made the whole creation subservient to humanity.

> Do you not see that God has made subject to you [pl.] whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth? (Q. 31:20)

> He has made subject to you [pl.] whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth; it is all from Him. (Q. 45:13; see also 16:12–14)

One present-day commentator, Fazlur Rahman, says that the human mission as God's vicegerent is "to create a moral social order on the earth."[20] The same thought is found in medieval commentaries. One from the fifteenth century interprets Q. 2:30 as God saying, Adam "substitutes for me in implementing my decrees in the earth."[21]

One final Qur'anic reference to consider is 33:72, where the Qur'ān describes the mission of being God's vicegerent as "the Trust" (*al-amāna*). It says that God offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth, but they refused to accept it, afraid of the burden involved. It was accepted by humanity, whom the Qur'ān speaks of as being unjust and foolish.

Today, too, many wonder whether these biblical and Qur'anic statements do not overestimate human potential. Many parts of the world are threatened with or actually face overpopulation, a depletion of natural resources, and abuse of and strain on the ecosystem. Poverty, hunger and disease are rampant. Human greed and mismanagement are seen as principal causes. Are we capable of only injustice and foolishness? Or do we have within us the capacity for better? If so, how do we go about it? These are questions deserving of discussion between Christians and Muslims. In our shared convictions that we are created and sustained by God and have been given a sacred trust as guardians of the creation under the sovereignty of God, it seems there is considerable scope for creative conversation and cooperation.

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18. Kenneth Cragg, *The Privilege of Man: A Theme in Judaism, Islam and Christianity* (London: Athlone, 1968), 28.

19. Ibid. Although there is no biblical parallel to this story, there is a very similar tale in the Life of Adam and Eve, a Jewish work from the first century of the Common Era. Chapters 12–16 in this document tell how the archangel Michael ordered the (later) devil and the angels to worship Adam since he was created in the image of God. Because of the refusal of the devil and the angels to worship Adam, they were expelled from heaven and cast down to earth. See "Life of Adam and Eve," in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 2 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985): 262. I am indebted to my colleague at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Ralph W. Klein, for bringing this to my attention.

20. Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qurān* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), 18.

21. *Tafsīr al-jalālayn* (Beirut: Dar al-ma'rifa, 1983), 8; my translation.

Common Wisdom: Luqmān the Wise in a Collection of Coptic Orthodox Homilies

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In the summer of 2004 I was invited by the organizers of the conference "The Life and Times of St. Shenouda the Archimandrite"[1] to investigate collections of Arabic homilies attributed to this great monastic leader, for many years (c. 385–465)[2] the spiritual head of the White Monastery federation at Atripe, across the Nile from the ancient city of Akhmim (= Shmin, Panopolis).

The first collection to which I turned my attention consisted in nine homilies for the seven Sundays of Lent, concluding with Palm Sunday,[3] preserved in a seventeenth-century manuscript that had once been in the library of the White Monastery, now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris as ms. *arabe 4761*.[4] It quickly became clear to me that the homilies preserved in this manuscript were not translations from Coptic originals, as one would expect were the attribution to St. Shenoute[5] correct, but original Arabic-language compositions. I was not particularly surprised by this result, but I *was* surprised to discover that the homilies were not merely exercises in biblical exegesis (although biblical quotations and allusions abound) or in the use of the "language of Zion" (that is, specifically churchly discourse). Rather, the preacher, a Coptic Christian probably active sometime between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries, also drew from a store of edifying tales and wisdom literature that was *shared* by Christians and Muslims.

In this essay I highlight one element of the "common wisdom" that makes an appearance in these homilies: the wisdom tradition associated with Luqmān the Wise. I offer this as a modest tribute to my friend and teacher Harold Vogelaar, who, through-

1. The conference was sponsored by the Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society and held at the University of California at Los Angeles, August 13–14, 2004, and its proceedings published in *Coptica* 4 (2005). I am grateful to the society's president, Hany Takla, for the invitation to participate and for providing me with copies of the relevant manuscripts.

2. All dates in this paper are given in the Common Era.

3. The manuscript gives two homilies for each of the first two Sundays of Lent, for a total of nine homilies.

4. For details of the manuscript and its contents, see my contribution to the conference: Mark N. Swanson, "St. Shenoute in Seventeenth-Century Dress: Arabic Christian Preaching in *Paris, B.N. ar. 4761*," *Coptica* 4 (2005): 27–42.

5. The saint's name takes various forms: "Shenoute" is transliterated from Sahidic Coptic, while "Shenouda" reproduces the Arabic pronunciation.

out his career, has sought out Christian-Muslim "common wisdom" and has fashioned his life and ministry according to it.

Luqmān the Wise in Christian homilies

Luqmān the Wise makes two appearances in these homilies. The first is in a homily appointed to be read after the Gospel on the Second Sunday of Lent.[6] Throughout, the preacher commends the Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting, and good works—and stresses the need to repent in this life *before* death, since death closes the door on the possibility of repentance and forgiveness. The problem, however, is that human beings are heedless and negligent. They require the ministry of scholars ("guides to God"), ascetics ("the way to God"), merchants ("God's faithful on his earth") and kings ("shepherds of the religion of God"). Unfortunately, the preacher explains, many hardships and misfortunes have come upon the people because these leaders have neglected their responsibilities: scholars have abandoned their pupils, ascetics have desired the world, merchants have not been good stewards, and kings have oppressed their subjects and have not feared God![7] The preacher comments:

> How can these unseemly matters be, and how can *we* be negligent about things pleasing to God our Creator, and about mentioning him constantly in prayer?
>
> Luqmān the Wise says:
> "O my son, don't let the rooster be better than you!
> For it, when the night is half spent, beats its wings and cries out to God in praise."
>
> So if a lowly bird that has no value praises God, how can it be that a noble human being, whom God has set above all the creatures, does not praise God and ascribe him holiness at all times?[8]

This reference to Luqmān the Wise is followed by other quotations from better-known authorities: St. John Chrysostom, Solomon the Wise, and Our Lord [Jesus Christ].

Another quotation from Luqmān the Wise is found in the following homily, for the Third Sunday of Lent.[9] Surprisingly, this homily is not centered on a biblical passage or on the life of a Christian saint but rather on a story about Alexander the Great. We read that this great conqueror once discovered a country ruled by a woman. Taken aback by (what the reader is to understand as) this surprising state of affairs, Alexander made inquiries and learned that there was a male heir to the throne but that he had refused the kingdom and gone off to live by himself among the tombs. Alexander sought him out and attempted to persuade him to return to his city, be crowned as king, and serve as Alexander's loyal vassal. The hermit prince agreed, but on the condition that Alexander grant him four things: youth without aging, eternal happiness without grief, bodily health without illness, and life without death. Alexander, astonished at this request, replied that these four are impossible for human beings, to which the hermit prince responded that it was then better for him to attend to the demands of God rather than to the affairs of kingship in this passing world. Alexander, stricken by he prince's words and conscious of his own thoroughgoing enmeshment in worldly affairs, departed in

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6. *Paris, B.N. ar. 4761*, ff. 20v–28v.
7. Ibid., ff. 20v–23r.
8. Ibid., f. 23rv.
9. Ibid., ff. 29r–36v. Edition and French translation: Victor Ghica, "Sermon arabe pour le troisième dimanche du Carême, attribué à Chenouté (ms. *Par. ar. 4761*)," *Annales Islamologiques* 35 (2001): 143–61. A partial English translation may be found in Ashraf Hanna, "St. Shenouda's Writings," *St. Shenouda Coptic Newsletter* 1, no. 4 (July 1995): 4–6.

sorrow and with a request for prayers.[10]

In his response to the hermit prince's surprising request, Alexander quoted or alluded to scripture in order to prove the inevitability of suffering, as affirmed in Psalm 34:19 ("Many are the afflictions of the righteous") and illustrated by the careers of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the reality of illness, such as that of Job; and humanity's mortality in Adam ("You are dust, and to dust you shall return," Gen 3:19). Alexander concluded his speech about the inescapability of suffering and death with a quotation that does not come from the Bible:

> Also, Luqmān the Wise says:
> "God has humbled the people of the world with two traits: death and poverty.
> Were it not for death, no stubborn tyrant would submit.
> Were it not for poverty, no free people would serve slaves."[11]

In both instances in which Luqmān appears in these Christian homilies, he is quoted as a figure of authority. His maxims take their place alongside verses from the Bible and a saying from Chrysostom. And so we ask: Who is this Luqmān, and how did he become an authority for an Egyptian Christian preacher and his audience?

The development of the Luqmān tradition

For most contemporary readers of these homilies, Luqmān the Wise is best known as the sage for whom the thirty-first *sūrah* of the *Qur'ān* is named.[12] There he is mentioned (v. 12) as one to whom God gave *al-ḥikmah*: wisdom, or even a Book of Maxims.[13] Several of his sayings are then presented in the form of admonitions to his son (introduced with the words "O my son," in vv. 13, 16, and 17), which is reminiscent of chapters 1–7 of the biblical book of Proverbs as well as other Near Eastern wisdom collections, for example, the aphorisms of Aḥiqar the Wise.[14] Of the six verses of the *sūrah* that have the form of

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10. Ghica was unable to locate this story among the many recensions of the Alexander Romance and related materials (Ghica, "Sermon," 147–50). However, the story does bear some resemblance to the stories about Alexander's visit to the Brahmins or *gymnosophistoi*—the "naked philosophers"—of India, and their King Dandamis. In contemporary English translations, see Richard Stoneman, *The Greek Alexander Romance* (London: Penguin, 1991), 131–33 [from the β-recension]; idem, *Legends of Alexander the Great* (London and Vermont: Everyman, 1994), 34–56 [Palladius, *On the Life of the Brahmans*]). For background to the Alexander Romance in Arabic Christian literature, see Samir Khalil, "Les versions arabes chrétiennes du Roman d'Alexandre," in *La diffusione dell'eredità classica nell'età tardoantica e medievale. Il "Romanzo di Alessandro" e altri scritti. Atti del Seminario internationale di studio (Roma—Napoli, 25–27 settembre 1997)*, ed. R. B. Finazzi and A. Valvo (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), 227–47.

11. *Paris, B.N. ar. 4761*, f. 34v; Ghica, "Sermon," 156, no. 79–80.

12. Helpful encyclopedia articles on Luqmān include B. Heller and N. A. Stillman, "Luḳmān," *Encyclopedia of Islam* (new ed.), V:811–13; A. H. M. Zahniser, "Luqmān," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2001–2006), III:242–43; and Dmitri Gutas, "Luqmān: a Legendary Hero," in *Encyclopaedia of the Holy Qur'ān*, 5 vols., ed. N. K. Singh and A. R. Agwan (Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2000), III:724–27.

13. Gutas makes an argument for *ḥikmah* being understood here as a *book* of maxims in "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature: Nature and Scope," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101 (1981): 49–86, at 50–51. He summarizes the evidence for the existence of written wisdom collections in pre- and early Islamic times at pp. 55–57.

14. Aḥiqar was said to be the wise counselor of the Assyrian kings Sennarcherib

Luqmān's admonitions, the first four (vv. 12–13, 16–17) enjoin right piety: gratitude to and exclusive worship of the One God, prayer, "bidding to honor and forbidding dishonor," and patience; these are of a piece with prophetic teaching throughout the Qur'ān. The next two admonitions (vv. 18–19), however, are strongly reminiscent of ancient wisdom traditions. In the rendering of Abdel Haleem:

> Do not turn your nose up at people,
> nor walk about the place arrogantly,
> for God does not love arrogant or
> boastful people.
> Go at a moderate pace
> and lower your voice,
> for the ugliest of all voices is the
> braying of asses.[15]

There is no mention of Luqmān in the Qur'ān outside of the thirty-first *sūrah*, but his mention there was sufficient to make him *the* great sage of Islamic tradition, one who could be safely admired by Muslims: his wisdom was given by God and sanctioned by the Qur'ān and therefore not in any way in competition with the revelation vouchsafed to Muḥammad. As a result, Luqmān was of great interest to later scholars and became a magnet for wisdom literature of all kinds. In a first stage of development,[16] a major written collection of Luqmān material came into existence; the convert to Islam from Judaism and transmitter of pre-Islamic materials Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. c. 730) is the critical figure here. He is said to have read ten thousand *bāb*s—chapters? headings?—of Luqmān's *ḥikmah*.[17]

In a second stage coinciding with the great age of translation into Arabic, Christians as well as Muslims played a role in shaping the expanding Luqmān corpus. One of the greatest of the translators, the renowned "Nestorian" Christian scholar Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, included Luqmān material in his *Nawādir al-falāsifah* (*The Rarities of the Philosophers*); furthermore, it was probably through Christians that Arabic versions of Aesop's fables were made and attributed to the new "ecumenical" Luqmān.[18] This second period culminates, however, with a collection by a Muslim scholar with strong ties to the Fatimid court in Cairo: *Mukhtār al-ḥikam wa-maḥāsin al-kalim* (*The Choicest Maxims and Most Beautiful Words*) of Abū l-Wafā' al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik, composed in 1048–1049.[19] While al-Mubashshir's work includes wisdom material from many sources, the section on Luqmān is sizeable; it occupies seventeen pages in 'Abd al-

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and Esar-haddon (7th c. B.C.E.). An Arabic recension of his life and teaching was published with a French translation in L. Leroy, "Histoire d'Haikar le sage," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 13 (1908): 367–88; 14 (1909): 50–70, 143–54.

15. *The Qur'an: A New Translation*, trans. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 262. Rendel Harris once pointed out a parallel to v. 19 in the aphorisms of Aḥiqar the Wise: see Leroy, "Histoire," 13 (1908): 371 (no. 8); English trans. in Gutas, "Luqmān: a Legendary Hero," 725.

16. According to Gutas, who very helpfully summarizes the history of the Luqmān tradition in "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 57–58, which is the principal source for this entire paragraph.

17. Ibid., reproducing the report from Ibn Qutaybah's *Kitāb al-Ma'ārif*.

18. A collection of forty-one fables of Lukmān, copied by a Coptic Orthodox scribe in 1299, is found in *Paris, B.N. ar. 175*. This collection was published with a French translation in 1850: J. Derenbourg, *Fables de Loqman le Sage* (Berlin and London: A. Asher & Co., 1850).

19. For biographical information on al-Mubashshir, see Franz Rosenthal, "Al-Mubashshir ibn Fâtik: Prolegomena to an Abortive Edition," *Oriens* 13–14 (1961): 136–38.

Raḥmān Badawi's edition of 1958.[20]

Al-Mubashshir's *Mukhtār al-ḥikam* is a work of extraordinary importance in the history of books and their transmission. It was translated into Spanish (as *Bocados de oro*) before 1257, and translations were printed in France, England, and Spain before 1500.[21] However, extracts from al-Mubashshir's work were being copied by Egyptian Christians at least as early as the fifteenth century, as we know from the manuscripts *Paris, B.N. ar. 49* and *309*.[22] Other manuscripts bear witness to the material's continuing interest to Egyptian Christians[23] as well as to the use of Luqmān material among the Melkite Christians of Syria.[24]

Luqmān among Christians and Muslims

The Luqmān materials in *Paris, B.N. ar. 309* (15th c.) were published, with a French translation, by Leroy in 1909, providing us with a convenient collection of Luqmān sayings as they may have been known to a late medieval Coptic Orthodox preacher.[25] The first section, *The History of Luqmān the Wise* (*Akhbār Luqmān al-ḥakīm*),[26] presents several reports about his origins. While these differ in detail, they tend to make him of African origin and a slave (as was Aesop!) and a contemporary of King David.

It is said that one day King David summoned [Luqmān] and told him that he would be made *qāḍī*, to exercise judicial authority among the people. He, however, refused. So [the king] said: "What is your problem with this, that you be a wise man truthfully pronouncing judgment among the people?" [Luqmān] said: "I do not wish to be exalted in this world, or strong and powerful, but tormented and debased in the world to come! Whoever sells the hereafter for the sake of this world will lose them both!"

[The narrator of this report] said: God (glory be to him!) was pleased with this speech, and sent him an angel to help him in [the acquisition of] wisdom; and he became the wisest of the people of earth. David used to spread the news of his wisdom and say to him: "Congratulations, O Luqmān! You have been granted your full share of sagacity."

David's vocation[27] had been offered Luqmān, but he refused to accept it.[28]

The report echoes the majority opinion among Muslim scholars that Luqmān was not a prophet (as was David) but a man on whom exceptional wisdom had been bestowed.[29] It also establishes the asceticism that is at the heart of Luqmān's wisdom. The saying "Whoever sells the hereafter for the sake of this world will lose them both" could well summarize the point of

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20. So Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 58; I have not seen the edition, which was published in Madrid.

21. Ibid., 133–34, 149–55.

22. See Gérard Troupeau, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*, vol. 1 (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1972): 34–35, 270–71. Gutas mentions the possibility that the manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale could represent extracts from one of al-Mubashshir's sources rather than from *Mukhtār al-ḥikam* itself; "Arabic Wisdom Literature," 58. The matter awaits investigation.

23. E.g. *Paris, B.N. 310* (17th c.) and *4898* (18th c.); *Cairo, Coptic Museum supp. Hist. 6* [new register no. 515] (1739); *Cairo, Coptic Patriarchate Bibl. 58* [Simaika 120] (1788).

24. E.g., *Paris, B.N. 28* (1539), and *Vatican City, B.A.V. ar. 286* (17th c.).

25. L. Leroy, "Vie, préceptes et testament de Lokman (texte arabe, traduction française)," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 14 (1909): 225–55.

26. *Paris, B.N. ar. 309*, ff. 38v–41r; Leroy, "Vie, préceptes et testament de Lokman," 226–28 (Arabic text), 241–43 (French trans.).

27. Lit. "the matter which David was in."

28. *Paris, B.N. ar. 309*, f. 40r; Leroy, "Vie, préceptes et testament de Lokman," 227 (Arabic text); 242 (French trans.).

29. Modern discussions of this point may be found in 'Abd Allāh Kannūn al-

view of the hermit prince who refused Alexander's offer of kingship.

After a few more "historical" anecdotes about Luqmān, the text of this manuscript turns to *The Rules of Conduct of Luqmān the Wise*, a long set of admonitions to his son, each beginning "O my son." Among them is the saying about the rooster, with wording almost identical to that found in the homily for the Second Sunday of Lent.[30] This set of admonitions is followed in the manuscript by *The Testament of Luqmān to his Son before His Death*, and here we find the saying about death and poverty, with wording nearly identical to that found in the homily for the Third Sunday of Lent.[31] It is not far-fetched to think that the preacher of the "Shenoutian" homilies in *Paris, B.N. ar. 4761* was familiar with a work such as that preserved in *Paris, B.N. ar. 309*.

Muslims, too, were familiar with *Luqmān* material of the sort preserved in *Paris, B.N. ar. 309*, and edifying maxims of Luqmān may be found in a wide range of sources. I illustrate with three instances of the saying about the rooster.

1. The lexicon *Thimār al-qulūb* (*Fruit of the Hearts*) by 'Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad al-Tha'ālibī (961–1038) devotes an entry to "the wisdom of Luqmān,"[32] identified as an Abyssinian slave of an Israelite at the time of King David. Al-Tha'ālibī gives a sampling of Luqmān's "most beautiful exhortations to his son," beginning with:

O my son, sell this world for the sake of the hereafter,
and you will gain them both![33]
O my son, beware of an evil companion, for he is like a sword:
its appearance is beautiful, but its trace is ugly!
O my son, don't let the ant be more clever than you,
for it gathers during the summer [in preparation] for the winter!
O my son, don't let the rooster be more clever than you,
for it cries out before daybreak while you are sleeping! . . .[34]

Al-Tha'ālibī's sampling of Luqmān sayings is just that, a sampling, and so it is difficult to interpret the saying about the rooster. Should it be taken with the saying about the ant and interpreted simply as an exhortation to early rising and hard work? Or should it be taken with the exhortation to "sell this world for the sake of the hereafter," in which case it could be interpreted as an exhortation to wake from spiritual slumber and to devote oneself to ascetic endeavor?

2. There is no question about the force of the saying about the rooster in a classic of the Islamic spiritual tradition, *Ayyuhā l-walad* (*Letter to a Disciple*) by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (1058–1111). The saying appears in the same form as in *Thimār al-*

Ḥasanī, *Luqmān al-ḥakīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1969), 22–24; or Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf, *Luqmān al-ḥakīm wa-ḥikamuhu* (Damascus: Dār al-Muṣḥaf, 1984), 106–9. Both allow for uncertainty on this point, and the discussion in the latter volume concludes: *wa-llāhu a'lam*, "God is the greater knower!"

30. Leroy, "Vie, Préceptes et testament de Lokman," 230, lines 1–3 (Arabic text); 244 (French trans.).

31. Ibid., 238, lines 2–4 (Arabic text); 252 (French trans.).

32. Abū Manṣūr 'Abd al-Malik Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Tha'ālibī, *Thimār al-qulūb fi l-muḍāf wa-l-mansūb*, ed. Ibrāhīm Ṣālih (Damascus: Dār al-Bashā'ir, 1994), I: 228–30.

33. We note that this is a precise complement to the saying found in *Paris, B.N. ar. 309*: "Whoever sells the hereafter for the sake of this world will lose them both!"

34. Ibid., 230. I was alerted to the presence of this material in *Thimār al-qulūb* by 'Abd Allāh Kannūn al-Ḥasanī, *Luqmān al-ḥakīm*, pp. 74-75.

qulūb, but in the context of an exhortation to keep vigil by night and to pray:

[Sufyān al-Thawri] said:

In the first part of the night, a Caller from beneath the Throne calls out:
"Let the worshippers arise!"
And they arise and pray as God wills.
At midnight, the Caller calls out:
"Let the pious arise!"
And they arise and pray until the latter part of the night.
And at the latter part of the night, the Caller calls out:
"Let those who seek forgiveness arise!"
And they arise and seek forgiveness.
And when dawn breaks, the Caller calls out:
"Let the heedless arise!"
And they arise from their beds as the dead shall be raised from their graves.

O my child . . .

It is narrated in *The Counsels of Luqmān the Wise to His Son* that he said:

O my son, don't let the rooster be more clever than you,
for it cries out before daybreak while you are sleeping!

The one who said this in verse did well:

In the dark of night a dove called out from a branch, after midnight—while I was sleeping.
By the House of God, I am a liar! Were I truly a Lover,
doves would not have outdone me in weeping.
I claim to be in love, fervently longing for my Lord—but I weep not, while the beasts are weeping.[35]

3. A more recent example comes from the supercommentary of Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣāwi (d. 1825/6) on the well-known *Tafsir al-Jalālayn*.[36] In his comment on *Sūrat Luqmān*, al-Ṣāwi reproduces a number of sayings attributed to Luqmān, beginning as follows:

O my son, take the fear of the Lord as commerce,
and gain will come to you without merchandise!
O my son, attend funerals,
but do not attend weddings;
for funerals will remind you of the hereafter,
while weddings will arouse your desire for this world!
O my son, do not be weaker than this rooster who cries out before daybreak while you are sleeping in your bed!
O my son, do not put off repentance,
for truly death comes suddenly! . . .[37]

Although we once again simply have a sampling of the sayings of Luqmān, those reproduced here have a consistent message: Live this life in watchfulness, repentance, and the fear of the Lord, in preparation for judgment and the world to come. With the saying "Do not put off repentance, for truly death comes suddenly" we have returned to the major theme of the Lenten homilies.

Whether in the Christian or the Islamic texts sampled here, Luqmān's saying about the rooster is used to exhort believers to prayer and to rouse them from heedlessness and negligence. Reading the Christian and the Islamic texts together, we become aware of realms of common wisdom and common piety shared by Christians and Muslims in the medieval Middle East. Luqmān the Wise was a teacher for them all.

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35. Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Ayyuhā l-walad*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Aḥmad Abū Zaynah (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1975), 43–46. I look forward to seeing the new bilingual edition: al-Ghazālī, *Letter to a Disciple = Ayyuhā l-walad*, trans. Tobias Mayer (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2005).

36. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣāwi, *Ḥāshiyat al-Ṣāwi 'alā Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, 4 parts (Mumbai: Molvi Mohammad bin Gulamrasul Surtis Sons, 1981). Again, I was directed to this reference by 'Abd Allāh Kannūn al-Ḥasanī, *Luqmān al-ḥakīm*, 70–73.

37. *Ḥāshiyat al-Ṣāwi* III:239.

Withdrawal for Reflection

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"...But I went away at once into Arabia . . . (Galatians 1:17)

In this essay I address Christian churches in the United States, particularly those that recognize the significance of Christian-Muslim relationships. I ask whether and how it is possible for a Christian church identified with this society and its self-idolizing culture to be an authentic participant in God's Mission—concretized, embodied, and incarnate in Jesus designated the Christ. Embraced, confronted, and called by God through Jesus, are we not, like Paul, asked to retreat again and again into Arabia to reexamine and rethink what God in Christ calls us to be and do?[1]

Three withdrawals into the Arabian wilderness

Saul's Arabian experience. Saul of Tarsus has recorded his Arabian experience. It began with a violent attack on Jesus and the Jesus movement. As a Jew, circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the tribe of Benjamin, and a Pharisee with a rigid interpretation of scripture and tradition (Phil 3:4–5, Gal 1:14), Saul was convinced that Jesus was cursed by God (Gal 3:13). The passage from Deut 21:23, "the one who is hung on a tree is cursed of God," was a banner under which Saul imprisoned and put to death the followers of Jesus. In his letters to the Galatians and Romans it is clear that from Saul's perspective Israel was the chosen of God; circumcision was a sign of a Yahweh-Israel covenant that excluded the Gentiles; and righteousness in preparation for the judgment of God called for an obedient response to the Mosaic Law (Rom 9:1–5). The claim of the early Jesus movement that Jesus was the longed-for Messiah promised by the ancient prophets was for Saul a demonic claim that threatened God's ultimate truth and had to be eradicated (Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6; Acts 9:1–9).

With this conviction that he and his fellow anti-Jesus loyalists represented the Truth of God, Saul hurried to Damascus to stamp out the early appearance of a truth-threatening heresy (Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6). On

1. One could question whether Paul went to Arabia to rethink the message. Acts 9:25 indicates that he escaped a Jewish death plot by leaving Damascus but makes no mention of a trip into Arabia. Acts 9:26 has Paul traveling immediately from Damascus to Jerusalem to join the disciples. In Galatians 1:17–18 Paul reports that he went into Arabia and then, after three years, to Jerusalem. Because Paul gives a first-hand report in Galatians, it is probable that the Arabian visit followed his escape from Damascus. Arabia was not densely populated and had no major cities, so it is likely that Paul sought refuge rather than Gentile converts. And it is certain that he would have been reflecting on the significance of his Christ encounter for his theology.

the road he claims to have met Jesus (1 Cor 15:8; Gal 1:12; Acts 9, 22, 26). From Saul's perspective Jesus had been justly crucified, his death had been advocated by members of the religious elite, and he had been executed by the Roman Empire—the provider of global prosperity and peace.

Jesus began the conversation by asking, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Jesus hereby identified with the Jesus-movement people!

"Who are you, Lord?" is Saul's stupefied response.

"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:1–9).

This experience sent Paul into Arabia to reconsider his understanding of the Truth of God. Everything had to be reconfigured. Saul had not met God through his interpretation of the Law as a ladder-climbing journey into the presence of a righteous God. Rather, God in Christ had met him right in the middle of his blindness to God's truth. "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). The ladder-climbing system was shattered. Zealous, religious persons were exposed as being blind to the ultimate purposes of God. Legal system climbing is not truth; trust in system-breaking love and grace was experienced as the source of authentic life.

Paul's initial thoughts moved on to other revolutionary statements. Jesus is the fulfillment of all the messianic dreams (1 Cor 1:20). Righteousness is not the conclusion of a law-keeping discipline but the sheer gift of God (Rom 3:21–16). The Law is not the final saving act of God but serves as a pedagogical instrument for a particular chosen people (Gal 4:1–7). Jesus became a curse *for us* (Gal 3:13). A radical revolutionary vision, thought through while in an Arabian wilderness, provided Paul the dynamic initiative for an engagement with the first-century Roman Empire.

Jesus' Arabian experience. The Gospels indicate that Jesus' own ministry began as a revolutionary vision in the Arabian desert. Jesus' message and ministry began with the Holy Spirit driving him into the wilderness (Mk 1:12) to meditate upon the meaning of the voice from heaven that declared him to be God's Son. Was this a call to focus upon "bread," or material goods (Mt 4:3–4)? Was it a call to a violent revolutionary challenge to the *Pax Romana* (4:8–11)? Was it a call to use supernatural power in order to wow the crowds in the Coliseum seats (4:5–7)? Or was it a vision of justice, righteousness, and compassionate healing that would be achieved by vulnerable servanthood as envisioned by Second Isaiah: "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations" (Isa 42:1ff.; Lk 4:–20)?

According to the Gospels, Jesus was convinced that the chosen people who had been called to be a light to the nations had tragically lost their way (Isa 42:6, 49:6; Mt 5:14). They were salt that had lost its savor and fig trees that did not bear fruit; the religious elite had become unproductive stewards of God's vineyard. John came baptizing with the water of repentance and forgiveness in order that Israel as light to the nations might be restored.[2] With Israel and as an Israelite, Jesus entered into that baptism of transformation. The old Israel with no oil or light was to be buried and cleansed in the waters of Jordan. The new oiled lamps were to rise. The Light of God would again shine upon the earth. But the

2. See Oscar Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1950), and W. F. Flemington's article "Baptism" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1 (1962).

message and mission had begun in the desert, in recapturing the true vision of the Reign of God. It was in concretizing this Reign of God that Jesus, identified as the Prophet, the Son of Man, the Messiah, fulfilled all the prophetic dreams of ancient Israel (Lk 10:23). A revolutionary vision, prayerfully thought through in an "Arabian experience," empowered Jesus as he announced, "The kingdom of God is drawing near" (Mk 1:14–15).

Luther's Arabian experience. Our Lutheran tradition has Arabian roots, too. When Luther was still a boy carrying his father's dreams of his becoming a lawyer, Columbus "discovered" America. With the arrival in Latin America of representatives of the royalty of Portugal and Spain, the Catholic Church declared that the new land belonged to the Pope and their Church. Similar high-seas adventures and intercontinental journeys had already planted or were soon to plant the church in Africa, India, China, and Japan.

Luther has been criticized for not developing a Protestant branch of this expanding church to rival the papal global movement.[3] However, Luther represents a "retreat into Arabia" for rethinking the gospel message. James Scherer has attempted to capture Luther's reclaiming of the gospel as the foundation for the future mission of the church.[4] Luther's transforming "Arabian missiology" focused on salvation as a gracious gift of forgiveness and a "cloak of righteousness." The gift was not the consequence of a religious, disciplined climb into God's presence but the trusting reception of God's gift—in Paul Tillich's phrase, "the acceptance of my unconditional acceptance." Furthermore, Luther's Arabian reinterpretation was not initiated by a voice-from-heaven experience but from persistent conversation with the biblical text.

Paul, Jesus, and Luther are foundational theological models for the "retreat into Arabia" for rediscovering God's mission of truth.

Luther did have a "bolt of lightning" religious experience that so terrified him that he forfeited his father's legal dreams for himself. It frightened him into becoming a monk. It was as a monk that he attempted to scale the rugged mountains of religious discipline to find peace with God. It was as a monk and a biblical student that he also discovered the incredible mystery of God's grace. The righteousness of God was not a reward to be won; it was God's offering of the cloak of righteousness to those who trusted the Giver.

Paul, Jesus, and Luther are foundational theological models for the "retreat into Arabia" for rediscovering God's mission of truth. If we are to be authentic witnesses to God's truth encountered in Jesus, the Christ, we also must go into Arabia. We need to retreat for prayerful

3. James A. Scherer, *Gospel Church and Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), 54. See also Kelly A. Fryer's contribution to *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution*, ed. Richard Bliese and Craig Van Gelder, chap. 2, endnote 4 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005).

4. Scherer, *Gospel Church and Kingdom*, 51–66.

reconsideration of what we believe God calls us to be and to do. In our engagement with Muslim neighbors we must rethink our seeming imprisonment in U.S. identity and values. We also must reevaluate our theological identity and language in order that it may communicate rather than hide God's Good News.

Rethinking U.S. political identity and materialistic values

The most difficult challenge for U.S. churches when rethinking engagement with Muslim peoples is our identity as U.S. citizens. This is so because Christianity is so easily identified with American civil religion. Evangelical fundamentalism is quick to identify Christian commitment with national patriotism. Furthermore, the U.S. and Israel are perceived to be God's elect nations as world history comes to a final climax.[5] Evangelical fundamentalism decisively affects our U.S. identity because its vision is powerfully propagated by thousands of missionaries, here and around the world; by innumerable radio and television programs; and by current U.S. President George W. Bush, who is identified with this "Christian" vision.

National security as a crisis of faith and witness. A primary issue of our contemporary context is the obsessive concern in the United States for "national security." President Bush continually repeats that his primary responsibility is the security of the American people. Fear for our lives and safety after 9/11 has driven the national psyche into a seeming frenzy. The absurd dimensions of this xenophobic fear is reflected in a conversation I overheard in a small town in central Wisconsin just after the U.S. security color code had been raised. A supermarket checker, in a terrified voice, questioned the safety of her local family. Her fear arose in spite of the fact that her children were far more likely to die at the hands of a drunken driver, be sexually abused, or die of staph infection in a Wisconsin hospital.

Elevation of the security of U.S. citizens (5 percent of the world's population) far above the security of the global human community results in a perspective that considers the other 95 percent of the global family to be of secondary significance and marginalized for the sake of the security of the U.S. population. People outside the U.S. can then be patriotically designated as collateral damage—human bodies to be heaped up and burned to the god of the U.S. preventive war.

These "other" peoples of the world angrily resent being classified as inferior citizens of the world's family and the U.S. arrogance that assumes the superiority of U.S. values, democracy, and power. The "world" does not hate us because of our values or our freedom. We are hated because of our domineering arrogance and power. Like a divinely appointed emperor, the President declared: "You are either for us or against us!" Globally, this nation is identified as Christian. The President of the U.S. claims to be a "born-again" evangelical Christian; the President's cabinet is photographed in prayer; Billy Graham as national chaplain supports the President in prayer. With those images floating around the world, Jesus the Christ is often identified with the national security powers of the U.S. In contrast to the vulnerable ser-

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5. Charles Marsh, Professor of Religion at the University of Virginia and self-designated "evangelical," reports in the *New York Times* (January 20, 2006) on pro-war sermons preached by evangelical fundamentalists during the time leading up to the present war in Iraq.

vant of God and humanity, Jesus is mutated into the omnipotent wrathful Power who seeks the security of a "Christian elect."

Ironically, the right-wing fundamentalist movement advocates a theology of a fire-breathing judge who has designated the U.S. and Israel as special agents in the concluding chapters of world history. The world continually hears the incantation "May God bless America" as an Empire seeks to impose its national security and values upon the earth.

An imperial faith totally distorts the gracious divine presence that came to expression in the life, message, and mission of Jesus the Christ. The Jesus of the hugely popular *Left Behind* series drives nails into the hands of the vulnerable servant of God whose hands still bear the marks of a first-century cross. It is irresponsible to take the name of God, from which all life and healing flow, and use that name for the security of 5 percent of the human race! To confess God as the Maker of heaven and earth, or to confess Jesus as the Son of the Cosmic Maker, is to confess that we belong first to the human race and secondarily to family and nation. The only legitimate primary prayer is "God bless the human family." In a war-obsessed society fixated upon self-security, the authentic Jesus people ask "What is best for the human race?" Jesus people are called to speak God's truth to a frightened and often violent people. A church in this distorted context is driven into Arabia to distinguish itself from national deities.

At the beginning of the Iraqi conflict I deeply appreciated Bishop Mark Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as he and other church leaders questioned and challenged U.S. policy. Thankfully, there are Jesus people who, like Nathan the prophet challenging David the king, and like Stephen challenging the people of the synagogues, question and challenge today's powers.

Materialistic values and concepts as a crisis of faith and witness. The crisis of the Jesus movement in the U.S. today is not limited to national security fears and imperialistic drives. It includes also the acceptance of materialistic principles and values that dehumanize people and society. U.S. society is permeated with such values. A person is valued by the wages or salaries accumulated, by the money and commodities possessed, and by the entertainment and recreational possibilities at one's fingertips.

This system believes that a free/deregulated market will produce most efficiently the goods and services needed to create a life-fulfilling society. Human wisdom and technological ability are called upon to discover genetic codes, perform brain surgery, and engineer high-performance robots to replace laborers on assembly lines. However, this wisdom and technology cannot be trusted to evaluate the market system, which might be defective or dehumanized. At present 30 percent of the world's population produce and consume 85 percent of the world's wealth, leaving approximately one billion people living in abject poverty and another billion living on $2 a day. The growing global gap between the possessors and dispossessed is simply accepted as the consequence of people unwilling or unable to compete in the global economy, and in the meantime we will be about the American patriotic duty to buy often and consume much more than we need.[6]

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6. Walter Brueggemann, "Counterscript: Living with the Elusive God," *The Christian Century* (Nov. 29, 2005), 22–23.

The national security/imperialistic drive within our society, coupled with materialistic free-market consumerism, indelibly marks our society and even our churches. The free market largely determines pastoral and staff salaries within churches and consequently pension benefits. In the ALC 70 percent of pastors chose not to invest their pension funds in socially responsible investments but rather put them into funds guided by the materialistic free market where profits take priority over human values. How does one testify to the compassion and love of Jesus who values, affirms, and is committed to reconciling relationships and the restoration of authentic humanity? How does one testify to Jesus who prioritized the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized when one's life is entwined with a system that prioritizes the rich and wealth? Does that not drive us into an Arabian-desert encounter with God and our conscience? Are we not called into Arabia before we are able to witness among Muslim peoples?

How does one testify to Jesus who prioritized the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized when one's life is entwined with a system that prioritizes wealth?

An account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, early Bishop of Smyrna, reports that this 83-year old bishop was dragged before an imperial legate in the midst of a multitude of citizens. They cried out for his death with the words "Away with the atheists and the destroyers of our gods!" (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, chaps. 9–13). Polycarp and the early Jesus people refused to recognize the Empire and the Emperor as the divine power before which everyone bowed in gratitude for imperial security and prosperity. They steadfastly proclaimed that Jesus was Lord and that the Father of Jesus was God. In reaction to the Christian vision the Roman populace condemned the Jesus people as atheists, denouncers of Roman gods, and betrayers of imperial security and prosperity.

Perhaps in our desert experience we can listen for the Spirit's call and reclaim the title "atheists" that was hurled at the early Christians by the population of the Roman Empire. Can we by the power of the Spirit muster the courage to reject our own imperial deities? Does the Spirit not drive us into our Arabian experience to ponder how we can extricate the authentic gospel from its identification with the societal deities of U.S. culture? When will we recognize that our baptism into Jesus and the Father and the Spirit is an identity that takes priority over a pledge of allegiance to our flag?

Tim LaHaye, one of the authors of the *Left Behind* series, claims that red, white, and blue blood flows through his veins.[7] This vulgar distortion of the faith and the less vivid reflections of it found in ourselves must be encountered in our Arabian wilderness experiences. With Jesus we are called into our own dialogue with God and Satan in order that we might possibly be salt, light, and leaven in the world.

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7. Timothy LaHaye, *Newsweek* (May 24, 2004), 48.

Reevaluating our witness among Muslim peoples

This issue of *Currents* is dedicated to the recognition of Dr. Harold Vogelaar, Professor of Islamic Studies and Interfaith Relations at LSTC, so I focus here on the seeming impossibility for U.S. citizens to witness authentically to Jesus among Muslim peoples. In the remainder of this essay I touch on several theological issues significant for Dr. Vogelaar that emerge when there is an engagement between Muslim and Christian peoples.

Sacred texts. When I began to teach theology in Nigeria 48 years ago, I noticed that Muslim and Christian texts were at the heart of many discussions. However, even more important was the understanding of the nature of those texts. Traditional Muslim theology insists that the Qur'an in Arabic is the literal Word of God and as such is inerrant and infallible. Allah gives a verbal message to an angel; the angel gives that message to Muhammad; and Muhammad speaks that message to the people. The message is in no way influenced by the consciousness of the prophet. The prophet is merely a vehicle of communication. Textual studies do take place within Islam but are limited to seeking for the original meaning of the text in a particular context and its possible relevance for today.

My early teaching experience was within an African ecumenical Christian context deeply influenced by Protestant orthodoxy and Christian fundamentalism. Most of the students understood the biblical text in the same way that their Muslim friends understood the Qur'an: the Bible was the result of a divine dictation of the inerrant word of God (see 2 Esdras [4 Ezra] 14:38–44). There are biblical passages that reflect this view of sacred texts, such as particular prophetic announcements that begin "Thus says the Lord" or with a similar introduction. However, biblical texts are permeated with historical accounts that make reference to historical sources rather than divine dictation (Josh 10:13; Num 21:14; 1 Chron 29:29); prayers that question God (Jer 20:7ff.; Job); content that reflects human fallibility concerning the nature of the universe (Genesis 1–3); contradictory views of eschatology (Psalm 30 and 1 Corinthians 15); uncertainty about one's theology (1 Cor 7:39–40); historical variations (the cleansing of the Temple in the Synoptics and John); and so on.

Many within the Christian community see the biblical sacred texts as deeply and indelibly molded by the human communities and authors who wrote, edited, or collected these texts. The art of biblical interpretation is the sensitive search within fallible and vulnerable human documents for a divine encounter that has the potential for transforming life that it might be permeated with trust, hope, and love. A fundamental starting point for the Jesus people in the art of hermeneutics is the conviction that Jesus is the Christ and, as the Christ, is the key to biblical interpretation. The biblical texts contain many and various theological traditions that are in conflict with one other. The Jesus communities look for those traditions that are fulfilled in Jesus as the Christ and those that flow from this event and explore most fully the Crucified Truth found in Jesus. The Lutheran tradition has inherited a treasure in Martin Luther's thought that scripture is the manger in which Jesus is to be found.[8]

These two premises—scripture is marked by the human, and Jesus, the Christ, not scripture, is ultimately the Word of

8. Martin Luther, "The Gospel of Christmas Eve, Luke 2.1–14," *Luther's Works* 51:21.

God—are basic to our Arabian theological meditation as we reflect on our engagement with Muslim peoples. These premises demand that the violent portrayal of God in many biblical passages not be interpreted as the Word of God.[9] Burnt offerings of women and children are not the Word of God (Deut 13:12–18). The words of Jesus, "It was said . . . but I say . . . love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44), are the Word of God. Imperial powers crush victims. Kingdom-of-God people are crushed in their nonviolent, vulnerable struggle to transform life from within. Jesus, the Christ, was hanged at Calvary as the consequence of that struggle. That is the Word of God!

Jesus, the Christ, and the scope of grace. Traditional theological discussions have assumed that the higher or more normative the Christology the more exclusive the gospel, and the lower or less normative the Christology the more pluralistic the gospel. Contemporary discussions usually accept this premise and assert that the New Testament reflects the former while post-Enlightenment and postmodern theology assume the latter.

These assumptions reflect a complete misunderstanding of much of the biblical and Jesus tradition.[10] We must reclaim that the central biblical and Jesus tradition affirms that God's saving activity and revelation is universally present and at the same time affirms that Jesus, the Christ, is the authentic concretization of God's activity and revelation. The revealing and transforming work of God incarnate in Jesus as the Christ is the same revealing and transforming work of God universally present throughout the universe. In the words of the Gospel of John, "The true light which is enlightening all of humanity was coming into the world" (John 1:9), or, in the words of Augustine, "The Son [Logos] came [broke into our sphere of reality] to where the Son already was" (*The Trinity*, Book II, chap. 5). "The Logos of the Gospel [John 1:1–14] reveals what is everywhere present, everywhere bringing light, everywhere pointing to and witnessing to that which is the true light coming into and enfleshed in the world."[11]

This cosmic revealing and saving Reality is witnessed to in a variety of traditions and texts throughout the Bible. There is one God who is Creator of heaven and earth; there is one human family created in the image of God with the potential of imaging God (Genesis 1); there is one Mind or Wisdom of God that is manifest throughout all creation and all humanity (Proverbs 8; John 1). This Wisdom or Word of God comes to expression within the chosen ser-

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9. Brueggemann, "Counterscript," 25. I find Brueggemann's use of sacred texts in interpreting the nature of God to be questionable. Every biblical text appears to have equal validity. He writes, "But the primary reason that the text is not monolithic, one-dimensional or seamless is not because of such flaws but because the key character is elusive. God is, as Job found, irascible in freedom and pathos-filled in sovereignty, one who traffics in hiddenness and violence. This God does not fit much of our theological preference and certainly does not conform to any of our bourgeois reductionism. This God is the one who keeps life ragged and open, who refuses domestication but who will not let our lives be domesticated, either." This irascible God does not challenge my irascible, violent inner self that is enticed by violent solutions to human problems.

10. See S. Wesley Ariarajah, *The Bible and Peoples of Other Faiths* (Geneva: The World Council of Churches, 1985), 1–28, and Mark W. Thomsen, *Christ Crucified: A 21st-Century Missiology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2004), chaps. 1, 3, 4.

11. Thomsen, *Christ Crucified*, 35.

vants of God (Isaiah 42; Col 1:20). However, the same Word of God is found outside the household of faith, salvifically active in a Gentile king, Melchizedek, who blessed Abraham, the father of the elect servants (Gen 14:17–20); in Job, who struggled with God; in a pre-covenant maidservant, Hagar, who saw God (Gen 16:7–14); in astrologers from the East, who honored the birth of a child and returned to their homes guided by God (Mt 2:1–12); and in Roman military officers who prayed to God (Acts 10). Jesus fully recognized the activity of God and faithful responses to God outside the "chosen people." He saw God in the life of a Syrophoenician widow serving Elijah (Luke 4); in Naaman the Syrian officer healed by Elisha (Luke 4); in the Samaritan businessman who rescued the ambushed Jewish traveler (Luke 10); and in the nations gathered on the final judgment day separated not by religious ritual or theological theses but by their response to the least in their midst (Mt 25:31–46).

Central to the early Jesus movement is its evident openness to the universal presence and activity of God and the conviction that the God who is universally present is also authentically and normatively concretized or incarnate in Jesus the Christ. One can trust that the life-affirming and transforming love encountered in Jesus embraces and permeates all creation. The radical nature of that all-embracing divine love becomes specific in the words of Jesus, "Love your enemy, pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44). It is incarnate in his words from the cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34).

Furthermore, all humanity is universally embraced by that divine love, grace, and forgiveness whether they know it or not! Note the unknown love of God for the terrorist of Nineveh (Jonah 1–3), the humble tax collector who cried out "God be merciful to me, a sinner" (Lk 8:13), or the stumbling ignorance of those who are welcomed or denied participation in God's ultimate cosmic re-creation (Mt 25:35ff.).

The Jesus movement is called into participation in this inclusive pluralism of the very early church.[12] This means recognizing the presence and activity of God within Muslim peoples and traditions. It means being called into engagement with people who have also walked and wrestled with God. It means the possibility of being enriched, informed, and transformed by the insights and wisdom of Muslims who also find themselves challenged to seek Truth. It means being woven into a common humanity where divine Truth is always distorted by human brokenness and error. It means that we trust that the compassion and grace and vulnerable servanthood embodied in Jesus already embraces Muslim people and Christian people in spite of our differing theologies. It means sharing visions of transforming Truth that are both similar and distinctive, and living those truths in the presence of God and one another.

We as the Jesus people are called into Arabia to rethink the height, depth, and breadth of God's saving presence. As the New Testament testifies, we do not honor Jesus by limiting the scope of God's grace incarnate in the Christ.

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12. John 14 has often been used as the basis for an exclusive position (also Acts 4:12), and all other data are subsumed under this theme. I have taken the inclusive/pluralist position as well-founded in the Jesus story and its biblical context. One can also read John 14:6–7 as compatible with this view. See Paul Rajashekar, "Navigating Difficult Questions," in *The Evangelizing Church*, 96–98, and Thomsen, *Christ Crucified*, 84–86.

Jesus, the Christ, and the vulnerability of God

Because the concept of the vulnerability of God is not accepted in Islam, it is an issue that must be considered in the Christian-Muslim dialogues. In recent decades the vulnerability and suffering of God has been a topic passionately debated within Christian theological discussions. The biblical tradition that focused on a narrative describing the living relationship between a personal God and the human family spoke of the Divine in terms of joy and sorrow, anger and compassion, love and forgiveness. In so doing it posited no questions about the suffering and passibility of God.

As the Christian faith moved into a Hellenistic culture it was affected and transformed by a philosophy that questioned the passion-filled immorality of Hellenistic deities and pointed rather to a metaphysical/ontological Reality that transcended human feelings and thought, an ultimate unchanging Reality beyond human limitations and therefore beyond suffering or passibility. The Ultimate One or Unmoved Mover was impassible and omnipotent.[13]

Christian theology adopted these Hellenistic philosophical categories and for centuries reiterated the impassibility of God. God could not and did not suffer. There were ongoing attempts to retain the earlier biblical tradition in discussions of the Incarnation in which the two natures of the Christ, although unmixed and distinct, shared the attributes of each other through a mystery of an exchange of attributes.[14] However, in recent years a multiplicity of theological initiatives has increasingly affirmed the suffering of God.[15] A primary thesis has been that one cannot affirm that God is love unless one is willing to also affirm that the cost[16] and consequence of love is suffering with, because of, and for the human community.[17]

This discussion is crucial to a dialogue between Christian and Muslim theologies. First, it is the vulnerability and suffering of God, particularly manifest in the crucifixion of Jesus, that authentically critiques Christian imperialism. The power of God revealed and active in a crucified Messiah is not the power of violent coercion that crushes the enemy but rather the power that is willing to be vulnerable to coercive violent power.

The original revelatory events of the Jesus tradition are radically distinct from the origins of the Jewish and Islamic traditions. For example, the Jewish community's celebration of Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights, commemorates the violent Maccabbean revolt against the Seleucid Empire led by Antiochus Epiphanes. The origins of Islam lie in the prophetic ministry of Muhammad who served not only as prophet but as wise statesman and a strong military leader. Nonvulnerable political coercive

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13. See Warren Williams, *The Passion of God* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), and Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988).

14. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 227ff. See also Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, 25ff.

15. See Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, 16ff., for a host of references to biblical theologians including Wheeler Robinson and Abraham J. Heschel, Asian theologians Kitamori and Song Lee, Process theologians Daniel D. Williams and Charles Hartshorne, and Black theologian James Cone. See also Moltmann's *The Crucified God*; Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); and Terrence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

16. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, 17.

17. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God.*

structures and power are integrated into both Judaism and Islam.

One must immediately add that ever since Constantine the same political order and coercive violence has been structured into Christendom. However, it did not so mark Jesus or the early Jesus movement. It is argued by Christians as well as Muslims that the reason for early Christian pacifism was simply that Christians as a persecuted minority were in no position to create a political entity requiring the use of force. However, when Christian numbers took over an empire it was only natural and logical for them to use their power to coerce a new law and order.

This is a misconceived approach to the radical challenge that confronts us in Jesus. Jesus asserted that the kingdom or Reign of God is led by a heavenly Father who passionately cared for all the children of God or by a Mother who wept over the children of the city. That love is deep—weeping and suffering with those marginalized and in pain and rejoicing and partying with those who had been lost and were now found! That love is life-affirming, healing, and transforming. It embraces all of humanity, even the enemy who insists upon denying God's creative and caring will. In the Reign of God, political or social violence was never to be used. Occupational forces of the Roman Empire were to be assisted when claiming their Roman right to have their burdens carried for a mile. Furthermore, in the name of the coming Reign of God one should spontaneously carry the burden for two. If in arrogance a superior slapped one's face with the back of his hand, kingdom people would offer the enemy a second chance—the other cheek. The old adage from sacred scripture—"an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"—is no longer valid among kingdom people. In the new world one challenges evil with good. The old customs regulating legal retaliation where evil was challenged by evil were no longer relevant in the kingdom that Jesus envisioned. Now humanity would participate in the perfect love of God who causes the rain and the sun to bless both saints and sinners (Mt 5:38–48).

Furthermore, in the vision of this radically structured new reality, people not only care for one another, they are recruited to serve one another. This is not the usual society where the elite and powerful demand the service of the weak. In the Reign of God the elite are marked by humble servanthood, not because they have no choice but because this is God's chosen vocation for Godself and for the new Spirit-created community (Mk 10:42–45).

The original revelatory events of the Jesus tradition are radically distinct from the origins of the Jewish and Islamic traditions.

This is an upside-down community. It does not fit or compete with the present structures. The marks of noncoercive love—universal value for all humanity and creative and caring service—shatter all ethnic and political structures that demand exclusive solidarity or coercive political force. This reality does not emerge out of law and order but bubbles forth from the cosmic springs of life as the Spirit of God

permeates life as salt, leaven, and light. It crosses geographical, ethnic, and political boundaries without resorting to the present world's weapons of military and economic power.

Some have remarked that, whereas the idealism of Jesus may be compatible with our personal moral or ethical standards, it is not adequate for the necessary order demanded by social and political structures. This would seem to be true. In the words of an ELCA theologian, "You wouldn't want Jesus as the mayor of your city" or of a Chinese communist bureaucrat, "You can't run a country that way."[18]

The contemporary Jesus movement continues to debate the question: How do we understand and interpret the radical Jesus of the Gospels? The Anabaptist movement (Mennonites and Brethren), the Quakers, and other peace movements insist that we be conformed to the nonviolent but prophetic Jesus.[19] There seems to be a radical Christian authenticity to this way of discipleship. Still, most Christians seek in some way to modify Jesus' nonviolence in applying the values of Jesus to contemporary political and economic structures. For example, when society discusses the possibility of war, we as Christians often begin our discussion with "a just or justified war theory." However, when we enter this world we are leaving the visions of Jesus and also the Buddha, and we are in the same world as our Muslim sisters and brothers and others living outside the Jesus and Buddha stories.

Our Arabian conversation and meditation must accept the challenge of a dialogue with the radical Jesus, a dialogue in which we attempt to hear the voice of God amid the cacophony of demonic voices and national anthems. We are called to recognize that ultimately the values of love, integrity, care, gentleness, trust, and compassion can never be coerced. These are kingdom-of-God values and affect us as salt, leaven, and light. Neither muscle nor might provides an ounce of power in their emergence (Zech 4:6). Furthermore, forgiveness and reconciliation, which are at the heart of the gospel, cannot be coerced. Force is irrelevant in matters of forgiveness. If I betray or hurt someone, there is no possibility of my reconciliation through coercive force or bribery. My reconciled future lies only in my family's or friend's willingness to accept my betrayal into their own life—to live with it, agonize over it, and offer me a future with them. My future with God lies in that same vulnerable love of God embodied on Calvary.

How do we live out this radical reality concretized in Jesus? How do we relate that radical vision to the ambiguity and brokenness of our lives as citizens, cultures, ethnic peoples? The original Jesus vision calls us into living relationships with people and the world. This vision may speak of a kingdom that transcends this world; however, it is passionately wrapped up in the world. Jesus, for example, challenged the revolutionary zealots of his day who convinced other first-century Jews and their Pharisaic leadership to commit national suicide. Jesus challenged the religious elite and their temple system that commercialized a faith intended to draw the community into communion with God. He challenged religious scholars and traditionalists who had distorted a prophetic and

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18. Both quotations are from personal conversations.

19. John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1972). See also Munib Younan, *Witnessing for Peace* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), and Mitri Raheb, *Bethlehem Besieged* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), both of whom advocate nonviolence in a world of Zionist oppression.

wisdom tradition that lifted up the values of righteousness and compassion and replaced it with legalistic laws and rituals that burdened or damned most of the human race. Jesus proclaimed a radical vision of the kingdom of God that relegated Caesar and the Empire to cosmic irrelevance. However, he did not condemn a Roman centurion for his military vocation. Dare we find and follow this radical vision into our Arabian desert?

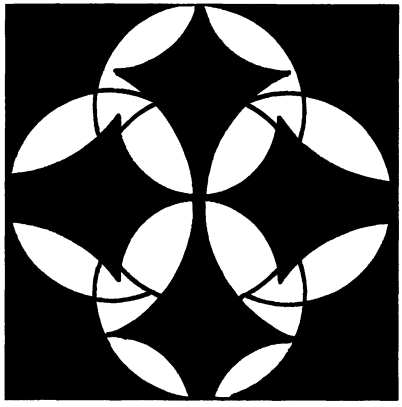
The Incarnation and Trinity

The theological formulations of the Incarnation and Trinity are teachings that have constructed walls between Christians and Muslims. This is tragic, because such walls hide the distinctive treasures of each community and do not allow recognition of the contextual nature of the later formulations.

The primary distinction between the two communities is found in the Jesus story and in the Muhammad-Quranic narrative. The Jesus story, as noted above, envisions a Reign of God embodied in Jesus and the early disciples as a reign of an all-embracing, life-affirming, vulnerable, forgiving servanthood. One of its primary marks is a Spirit-created, noncoercive dynamic that transforms life from within. It moves through creation as salt, leaven, and light. Islam from its inception affirms the value of creation and humanity's God-given purpose to guide the ordering of that creation under the guidance of Allah's messenger. The seal of that prophetic vicegerency is found in Muhammad's Quranic revelations that speak not only to personal ethics but also to the God-given political, social, and economic structures that are to be imposed upon society for its well-being. Here lies the primary distinction, originating in the revelatory events of each community.

A secondary distinction is the contextual articulation of the ultimate significance of these events for the faith communities involved. Within the Muslim community, the theological formulation has remained simple and faithful to its original Semitic context. Muhammad is a prophet; however, within a pluralism of prophetic voices, Muhammad and his Quranic message are the final seal of universal prophecy. It is normative for the Islamic community and global societies. In contrast to the Muslim insistence on maintaining the Semitic context and the Arabic language, the Jesus community immediately adopted the Greek language and began to interpret the gospel in Hellenistic theological and philosophical terms. Within the very early Aramean-speaking Semitic church Jesus was not confessed as divine. Jesus was a prophet, the Prophet, the Son of Man to whom God's Reign was to be gifted (Dan 7:9–14; Mk 14:60–62), the Messiah dreamed of by earlier prophets and kings (Lk 10:23), and Son of God as one called and designated perhaps for a royal role. As the Jesus movement entered the Hellenistic Mediterranean world it moved into an environment where Caesar was honored as lord and god and divinities were understood to visit the earth (Acts 14:8–18). Furthermore, with the mythologies of mystery religions and the categories of Neo-Platonic philosophy the early Christians found symbols and categories that enabled them to speak of the ultimate meaning of Jesus within the Hellenistic culture.

In the Roman Empire where Caesar was lord and god, Christians rejected this allegiance with the hymn so that "every knee should bend in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10–11). In the context of the mystery religions, one was called to die and rise not with deities of the natural order but with Jesus of Nazareth,



crucified under Pontius Pilate and raised by the Spirit of God (Rom 6:1–11). In the context of Neo-Platonic philosophy, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit of the biblical narrative were interpreted within Plotinus's philosophical world of the One, the Mind, and the Soul/Spirit.[20] Only in this Hellenistic world was Jesus confessed as divine. Within this context the Jesus movement explored the possibilities of testifying in ontological as well as historical symbols and realities. These confessions are already prevalent in the Greek New Testament. The Gospel of John declares that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1–14); however, Jesus ascends to meet his God and our God (John 20:17). Paul writes, "The one who did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped . . . humbled himself and took the form of a servant" (Phil 2:5–11). Paul also writes that the risen Christ will finally deliver all to God, that God might be all in all (1 Cor 15:28). All of these confessions are meant to testify that God's truth is expressed in the Jesus story. The theological symbols are not the Word of God; Jesus, the Christ, is the Word of God.

How do we rethink this faith in the Arabian desert? In our discussions and dialogue with Muslims, can we return to the ultimate issues that make the Jesus story distinctive? Rather than being guardians of trinitarian theological formulations and cross-bearers within sacred wars, can we, as a contemporary Jesus movement, return to the priority of compassion and love and God's call to the vulnerability of divine servanthood concretized in Jesus, the Christ? Can we once again accept a confession of our faith in Semitic historical terms in order that the primary gospel message might be heard?[21]

The understanding of the "sacred text," the scope of God's saving grace, the vulnerability of God and the crucifixion of the Christ, and the secondary significance of trinitarian and incarnational theology are theological challenges that call us "into Arabia."

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20. Augustine, *The Confessions*, Book VII.

21. See the study *God and Jesus: Theological Reflections for Christian-Muslim Dialogue* (Division for Global Mission and Inter-Church Cooperation, American Lutheran Church, 1986). See particularly Robert Jenson's "The Risen Prophet." Jenson and the study argue that within the Semitic world of Islam the role of the prophet is recognized. Jenson argues that the resurrection is God's act that identifies the Risen Prophet as the authentic voice of God. See also Mark Thomsen, "Christology of the Spirit and the Nicene Creed," *Dialog* 16 (Spring 1977): 135–38, where I argue that a Christology of the Spirit is a legitimate contemporary christological confession and would be applicable in a contemporary Semitic world.

Book Reviews

Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Liberator (A Biography). By Richard Deats. New York: New City Press, 2004. 136 pages. Paper. $12.95.

"Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth," said Albert Einstein about Mahatma Gandhi. Because Gandhi was an outsider to and critic of Western culture, his thoughts have not received the attention they deserve. However, there has been renewed interest in him in recent years by both activists and thinkers from around the world. Moreover, the government of India recently collected and published his works in 95 volumes.

Many people have written biographies of Gandhi, and Richard Deats's work may be the latest and the shortest (87 pages—the rest is a Foreword by Mary Evelyn Jegen and quotes from Gandhi's works on different themes). The book presents only a glimpse of Gandhi's more than sixty years of phenomenal public life and his enduring contribution to humanity. The purpose of the book is stated by Deats: "It is my hope that this biography will help introduce the life and message of Gandhi to a new generation of persons searching for a genuine alternative to war, intolerance and injustice" (p. 14). Deats presents the important events in Gandhi's life in chronological order and highlights certain programs he initiated and themes he emphasized. He shows how Gandhi became a great inspiration and guide to people who resist evil structures and oppressive regimes. He quotes Gandhi extensively throughout the book.

Because Deats himself is involved in resisting evil and oppressive structures, he writes with commitment and passion, which makes this book valuable and interesting. He goes beyond the popular understanding of Gandhi as a freedom-struggle leader using nonviolence, bringing to our attention his original contribution in religion, human nature, constructive programs, and so on. However, I think he fails to connect Gandhi's various activities and themes to help readers understand the most important mission in his life. Throughout his life Gandhi sought to develop a nonviolent way of life in which human beings could recognize themselves as God's children, irrespective of religion and culture, and live in truth, love and justice. The goal of his life was to present this nonviolent way of life as an alternative to the dominant Western consumerist culture, which is built on extreme individualism, ruthless competition, and violence.

I recommend this book with the hope that the reading of it will encourage the next generations to know more about Gandhi and his works and choose to follow and propagate the way of nonviolence.

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The Ecumenical Luther: The Development and Use of His Doctrinal Hermeneutic. By Richard P. Bucher. St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2003. 222 pages. Cloth. $30.99.

Oscar Wilde taught me to wonder if Life imitates Art. Do we invent style and meaning, or do styles and meanings invent us?

In *The Ecumenical Luther*, Bucher—whether he means to or not—offers a Lutheran hermeneutic of Life imitating Doctrine. This has much to commend it. For Luther and his followers, right understanding of Christ's good news liberates sinners; false teachings inevitably replace one bondage with another. Doctrine can be good soil in which saving faith grows or bad soil that strangles faith. Our Christian lives imitate our Christian doctrines, for better or for worse.

Luther cared passionately about right doctrine, as this book illustrates through three cases of Luther in dialogue. Bucher knows his material well and invites the reader into the details of key documents. Unfortunately, he also indulges historical stereotypes more than he explores

Luther's positive contributions to the "one house" of Christian faith. Amid the real and serious struggles that Christians have with each other over matters of faith and life, *The Ecumenical Luther* offers more reasons for doctrinal entrenchment. A more refreshing ecumenical outlook might have included Luther's ability for self-critique, his openness to Christians outside Latin-speaking Europe, and the relativization of human understanding in light of human sin and Christ's redemption, all of which have their roots in Luther's doctrinal struggles.

Bucher finds it ironic that Luther might have something to add to ecumenism; I find it sad that in this book Luther is again being used to divide. One does not write fairly about ecumenism by naming Luther's historical opponents as "Catholic controversialists," by describing carefully wrought ecumenical documents as "accommodation," or by characterizing female contributions to the Church as "feminist bromides"... that is, unless such is the Life one wishes to create through Art.

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Reconciliation: Restoring Justice. By John W. De Gruchy. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002. 255 pages. Paper. $19.00.

South African theologian De Gruchy, a noted Bonhoeffer scholar, shows how political ramifications can be drawn from the gospel itself when it is understood as offering reconciliation between God and ourselves, us and others, and us and creation. He contends that the gospel cannot be limited to personal piety or church traditions. Rather, the restoration of justice is drawn from God's justification with its renewal in interpersonal relations and social transformation. Justification is not primarily forensic, as Protestants tend to hold, but restorative to society and the earth.

His work is structured in three parts: (1) Discourse, which deals with the lexicon and grammar of reconciliation, (2) Agency, which shows how reconciliation can be embodied through dialogue, and (3) Process and Goal, which describes truthful interfacing between victim and victimizer. Much of De Gruchy's work is done in the context of the aftermath of apartheid and the quest for a democratic transition in South Africa. It is also done with the hope that the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam might find greater cooperation and appreciation.

De Gruchy well recognizes that "reconciliation" will not be the return to an ideal past, which of course did not exist. However, it can happen in Christ (p. 17) who opens us to the possibility of listening to the voice of the other (p. 16); this latter experience can bring about reconciliation. Truth then happens as we remember the past and relate it to the present (p. 23). Reconciliation can be seen as fourfold: (1) theological, between God and humanity, (2) interpersonal, as can be seen in a marriage, (3) social, in which alienation between communities is overcome, and (4) political, which could happen were improvement to be found in Ireland, the Middle East, and South Africa. In this regard, we must note that Paul's doctrine of justification offers not a new doctrine but a new movement. Christ's death is vicarious, not penal. Likewise, ethics is to be developed not in the conflict between good and evil but in reconciliation (p. 73). In the church we are with each other and for each other (p. 95).

Law is clearly the form of the gospel, here, as it was for Barth. Can law and gospel be unified by means of a "monarchic" reason—even here in its mode of *actio*? Should we not rather claim that justice is to justification as love is to faith—and thereby preserve the promise from being transformed into ethical directives? We would not need to worry that such a view would privatize faith, because the gospel is ever and only mediated through physical, cultural, and institutional realities—the church as a social gathering, sacraments as bodily words. If we were to accept this trajectory of distinguishing, not separating, law and gospel, we could acknowledge two types of righteousness, one by faith in God's promise against the law as accusing and the other the task of restoring community in light of law and creation. This latter move would preserve the gospel as promise and permit the gospel to unleash love manifest as compa-

rable to our Lord. For this reviewer, one certainly can and should accept the ethical goals for which De Gruchy is striving, though as law, not gospel.

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The Social Gospel of Jesus: The Kingdom of God in Mediterranean Perspective. By Bruce J. Malina. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000. xiii and 178 pages. Paper. $19.00.

Malina stands at the forefront of those who utilize social-scientific criticism of the New Testament. Besides general studies of the Jesus world, he has examined specific New Testament writers such as Paul and John. Having frequently examined the economic and political nature of the New Testament world, in this volume he tackles a more theological problem: the implications of Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God.

First Malina gives a short overview of his method followed by a brief description of social structures at the time of Jesus. He describes the means used by the elitist group to maintain the status quo, types of violence to people (dissidents) he calls vigilantism (pp. 37–69). In a major section he also describes modes of social control: (1) face-to-face, or fictive kinship; (2) face-to-grace, or a relationship maintained by agents (patron/client); (3) face-to-mace, or relationship maintained by institutional authority; and (4) face-to-space, a cosmological authority in which relationship is missing.

Malina rightly understands that Jesus' preaching of the kingdom must have economic and political repercussions, and he rightly perceives that the kingdom of God must be a face-to-face fictive kinship or collective social relationship. As such the kingdom of God offers ever new possibilities in more impersonal or authoritarian types of social relationships.

The reader who knows the work of Malina will find here extensions of prior thinking. As in other of his works the language comes from social science and may sometimes be difficult to assimilate (what he says is not all obscure—just a language that differs from most New Testament studies). Furthermore, because it derives from his Rauschenbush lectures the language and thought patterns reflect lecture language from time to time—e.g., the use of rhyme.

Apart from the primary thesis readers will find both stimulating ideas and questionable affirmations. One puzzle for me is his pattern of connecting ancient circumstances with modern situations. Like many others I found his *Windows on the World of Jesus* (1993) provocative, but I often wonder if the social characteristics Malina attributed to Jesus and his world actually applied to our world in the same way. I had the same problem with *The Social Gospel of Jesus.* While I could affirm most of Malina's insights into the New Testament world, I thought his connections with modern politics were all too facile. At least a more extensive analysis of current economic and political institutions would be necessary to be convincing.

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Ministry Loves Company: A Survival Guide for Pastors. By John Galloway Jr. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003. xiv and 168 pages. Paper. $17.95.

Galloway, a Presbyterian pastor, writes this book in response to the "we/they language" and "over-againstness" he is hearing and experiencing among parish clergy colleagues. He reminds clergy, "Our calling is an exciting place to be" (p. 4), and develops a realistic model for learning to appreciate congregations and their members.

Section One, "Coming to Town," opens with a comparison of a pastor's coming to a congregation with the image of an extended family's reunion in which pastor is not a member but rather the facilitator for the event. In order to work effectively, there are traditions, stories, secrets, and a family history to learn. To do this pastors must learn "focused laziness" and that it is never "my church." Practicing humility, patient listening, and appreciation will allow us "to have ears with which to hear" and learn. Pastors who do these practices well are "able to unleash the latent vision at the heart [of the congrega-

tion]" (p. 34). Galloway does not provide a detailed visioning process but, rather, helpful parameters and measures of effective visioning in the life of a congregation. Of course, this is done remembering that it is God, not congregation members, to whom we are ultimately accountable. Galloway has some very real examples of working on this struggle to change congregational attitudes. Yet doing so and developing a congregation that can discern, articulate, and work on that which is a priority rather than merely important will snag members' passions and commitment and develop a missional congregation.

The third section looks at hospitality from the unusual vantage points of numbers, administration, parking, and competition. We need to expect and organize congregations for growth: "success is not a mark of failure and failure is not a sign of integrity" (p. 65). We need to reimage administration as a tool enabling successful ministry. Although pastors have come to act as if it is inappropriate to acknowledge competition between churches, it is at the core of our culture. So, know what neighboring churches of all denominations are doing that is effective discipleship.

The fourth section on conflict is realistic. Galloway reminds us that much church conflict is "turf war," arguments over who gets space, supplies, people power, and pastor's attention. We need to assume we will disagree. We need to spend time figuring out how to address this core issue and not continuously smooth ruffled feathers. Pastors need to acknowledge their mistakes but stay focused enough to not take all conflict personally. Thankfully, Galloway does not give us another new theory of how to do self-care in the midst of congregational conflict. He does remind us that conflict is a powerful teaching moment when we need to be even more focused on our pastoral call for gospel preaching, teaching, and visitation.

In the final section on commitment, Galloway challenges, "Let's face it. Many persons who have publicly said that Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior have a deeper commitment to golf or soccer" (p. 129). This makes stewardship and discipleship the most controversial issues we will face. Pastors need to hit stewardship head on, setting a good personal example and continuously uplifting the need for all congregations to be about local and community missions. The mission budget needs to be set in advance of congregational meetings and is not flexible. Without missions a congregation is dead.

Galloway concludes with a poignant personal story that reminds us "Ours is a profession where we too often are the issue or we make ourselves the issue. We forget that we have been called to be fools for Christ" (p. 168).

This book has wisdom for all pastors—beginning, those beginning at a new site, old timers, and denominational/seminary personnel. This wisdom is presented anecdotally, with humor and, at times, sarcasm but never cynicism. Although there is little new information or data, this book is an excellent way to be guided and reenergized in ministry. Galloway includes some well-deserved critique of seminary training and the church placement process.

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Jesus: A Novel. By Walter Wangerin Jr. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005. 400 pages. Cloth. $21.99.

Ever since Tatian produced the first Gospel harmony in the second century, the church—first through Irenaeus, then others—has argued that the diversity of multiple Gospels is a blessing that should be preserved. Combining the accounts of Jesus' life just doesn't work from a literary standpoint. This goes also for novels. Even for the best of modern story tellers like Walter Wangerin Jr. the finished product falls short.

I've been using Wangerin's *Paul: A Novel* (Zondervan, 2000) for a number of years to get my undergraduate students started in their discovery of Paul. It has a wonderful approach, with ten different narrators sharing their impressions of the first-century apostle. Prisca's story is always the favorite among students. Yet there's also Barnabas, Titus, James, and Seneca the philosopher. Combined with Paul's own words from his letters and Luke's from Acts, the

divergent chapters come at Paul from all sides. The result is a character who is real and who provokes thought.

Wangerin takes the opposite approach in his latest bestseller, *Jesus: A Novel*. The four Gospels are reduced to one, and the sum is not greater than its parts. Actually, there are two narrators: the beloved disciple and Mary. They are a natural pair since they come together in John's Gospel at the foot of the cross. The idea of Mary as source, of course, goes way back to theories about Luke's investigative reporting while Paul was imprisoned at Caesarea. As for the beloved disciple, there is already an account in writing, well-read and appreciated.

The problem for those of us familiar with the Sunday Gospel readings is that Wangerin's beloved disciple just doesn't sound like the Fourth Evangelist. Throughout the story, an eagle soars overhead, but Wangerin's narrator seems oblivious to it. There are no "I am" sayings or lofty, soaring discourse. The signs are just synoptic miracles. "Lamb of God" and other symbolic language come off without a poetic flair. John's Jesus, "walking a foot above the ground," as Ernst Käsemann described him, plods along in synoptic shoes.

Perhaps this is the crux of the problem with the new novel. The beloved disciple has been turned into a fourth synoptic. The outline for the book is clearly Markan with a Lukan infancy section tacked on and with elements from the other Gospels, including John, thrown in for good measure. So we lose the distinctive five-sermon framework of Matthew, the long journey of Luke, and the back-and-forth Jerusalem/Galilee axis of John. The Samaritan woman at the well is turned into just another Galilean peasant, and Nicodemus slips through the cracks.

The Fourth Gospel has long been known for its distinctive omissions. Yet they have been reinserted into the beloved disciple's testimony. So the three temptations of Jesus are front and center, along with an explanation of supposed allusions in the Fourth Gospel. Likewise the beatitudes and the blessing of children.

In this new harmony, the synoptics have also lost their flavor, including Mark's sandwiching of stories and inclination for occurrences of threes. One is always confronted by the stark realism of Mark's Messianic Secret and the hostile picture of Jesus' family ready to take him home for a rest because he has gone out of his mind. Instead Mary stands patient outside the crowded house where Jesus is teaching and eager to show the way to the rooftop for the four friends who let down the paralytic into Jesus' midst.

In this day of renewed interest in Mary Magdalene, Wangerin's characterization of this disciple is interesting. Thankfully, she is not depicted as the converted prostitute as has been the case in too many such novels and sermons. Instead, her demon possession is depicted in a powerful way. Still, this depiction includes allusions to the "sinful woman" of Luke 7 who appears at dinner with her hair dangling in front of her face.

When it comes to the passion, the last supper includes both synoptic Passover-garnished Eucharistic words of institution and a Johannine footwashing. The long farewell discourse of the Fourth Gospel has been reduced to seven short sentences.

Totally unlike the Johannine Jesus dialoguing through the trials, this Jesus is silent like the lamb led to slaughter. Yet at the cross, there's an interesting combination of last utterances of Jesus. Here is where the choice becomes most difficult: synoptic despair or Johannine glory? Or a combination of all seven, like our Tenebrae services? For Wangerin, only two fall to the editing floor, the Johannine "I thirst" and "It is finished." For this beloved disciple, the call to "behold your mother" seems to leave him beholding only the words of the synoptic Jesus.

When approached as a whole, this novel is lacking. I would much rather read the canonical Gospels with their literary richness, one at a time. The sum is not greater than its parts. Yet this is not to say that the parts are not without value. Because we are used to reading the Gospels this way in church—one pericope at a time—the preacher and the parishioner both may uncover here a wealth of material. Individual episodes can often be taken as fascinating interpretations of biblical accounts. Such is the case with the wedding at Cana where first-century wedding customs are interwoven into the telling of the story.

A clever and thought-provoking innovation is the insertion early in the story of Barabbas as a childhood friend from Nazareth, ironically named, as Matthew has it, Jesus. Thus the zealot motif is interwoven through this character and his interaction with Judas Iscariot.

Wangerin does his historical research, building on the latest archaeological discoveries. Thus evidence of the priestly family Katharos from excavations in Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter finds its way into the story. So also is Joseph depicted as building stone houses in Sepphoris, though Wangerin doesn't let go of Justin Martyr's claim that Joseph built plows for farmers. Qumran is described accurately. Surprisingly, for a beloved disciple narrator, newly excavated Bethsaida still remains off the beaten path. Like Mel Gibson's soldiers, the Latin language seems to be preferred, yet not as historical research suggests.

The beloved disciple falls short in this telling, but Jesus' mother shines. Her anguish over an unexpected pregnancy and her frantic panicking over the loss of the twelve-year old Jesus at the temple add depth to the biblical story. Perhaps an entire novel from Mary's perspective would have been the way for Wangerin to go. Still, it would have been my preference if Wangerin had followed the *Paul* model and included a dozen interwoven narrations from characters other than the evangelists—many lesser characters like Joanna, Barabbas, James, the boy with the loaves and fish, Nicodemus, Jairus, and others.

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Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of the Apostles. By Hans-Josef Klauck. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003. xii and 136 pages. Paper. $15.00.

Acts is clearly anchored in the world of the first-century Eastern Mediterranean world. Various approaches have shown that. Sir William Ramsay years ago studied the sites and epigraphy of Asia Minor and found much that supported the accuracy of Acts. Others have studied the history and social structure of the sites, e.g., H. J. Cadbury and Colin Hemer, while Bruce Winter edited a five-volume study of the Book of Acts that located it in the culture of the first century. A. N. Sherwin-White correlated the text of Acts with Roman Law in *Roman Law and Roman Society in the New Testament* (Baker, 1992).

Klauck's slim book is a valuable addition to this literature. He looks at the religious context of Acts narratives, primarily those where there is material from Greco-Roman cities. His chapters cover the beginning (Acts 1–2), the evangelist Philip (Acts 8, Simon Magus and The Ethopian Eunuch), Caesarea (Acts 10–12), Paphos in Cyprus and Lystra (Acts 13:4–12; 14:8–20), Paul in Greece (Philippi and Athens), the Ephesus account (magic and the silversmiths in Acts 19), and the journey to Rome (Acts 27–28). Each narrative is carefully interpreted, with special attention to the role of magic and to relations with the Gentile world. This is a good read, interesting and informative. Klauck's own summary of his book communicates its coverage well (p. 119):

> If one assembles these individual fragments, the result is a very broad and vivid picture. In the course of the narrative, we gradually encounter a whole series of contemporary religious phenomena, each represented by specific adherents: magicians, astrologers and exorcists of Jewish or semi-Jewish provenance; a king who does not distance himself sufficiently from the cult of rulers, in an episode which also addressed the Roman imperial cult; a seer on a small scale with her greedy owners, as exponent of the classical *manteia*; devotees of polytheistic belief, who have recourse to familiar forms of sacrifice, or who defend the goddess of their city and fear for the future of their traffic in devotional souvenirs; philosophers whose curiosity is more noticeable than their academic training; but also kindly barbarians and some genuinely 'noble' pagans.

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Edgar Krentz

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Preaching Helps

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost—Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Series B

An Ecclesiology of Preaching

Midway through my sixth year as a seminary professor, it occurs to me that the vast majority of the people I talk to, let alone preach to, are "churched." And, more than "churched," they are "church leaders," people for whom the gospel is a full-time occupation. This reality shapes my ecclesiology of preaching.

As I see it, the true "preachers" who bring the gospel to the world are the baptized. The baptized have the opportunity to proclaim Jesus Christ to people with whom the pastor does not have a relationship and in places where the pastor cannot gain entry. The pastor standing in a pulpit preaches in ways that both empower the baptized to "preach sermons of their own" in the world and model how they might do it. The baptized might never utter a word; their proclamation might occur through attitude and action. Or the baptized might have the opportunity to speak—in a relationship or at a meeting or on the playground or across the back fence—and the preacher might very well provide the baptized with words that find their way into that proclamation.

In this ecclesiology of preaching, the preaching professor, who trains the pastors who will preach to the baptized so that the baptized can preach to the world, is far removed from the utterance that actually changes lives, or makes disciples, or proclaims the nearness of the Reign of God. This realization has two implications for my ministry. First, this realization drives me out of the classroom and into the pulpit. More than a preaching *professor* (a professor who teaches preaching), I am a *preaching* professor (a professor who spends most Sundays preaching).

Second, this realization drives me out of the seminary and into the city in search of conversation with those whose acquaintance with Christ is less than full-time. This is a challenging quest. Even in the rich diversity of Hyde Park, most of the people I know who are not Christian are people of deep if not profound faith. So it is hard for me to find conversations with people for whom God does not matter. Perhaps someday Thrivent will give me a grant to spend a sabbatical being "unchurched" (smile). In the meantime, I seek out conversation with those who are in conversation with people who do not know and do not care about Jesus.

When I was a parish pastor, I liked to visit parishioners at work. I would meet

them for lunch, learn a bit about their job, and ask about the challenges and joys of being a Christian as they did it. I learned a lot! These days, I like to talk with pastors who spend lots of time "in the world." Perhaps that's why I am especially pleased to welcome Pastor **Terry Graunke**, the Mission Developer of St. Matthew Lutheran Mission in Central Point, Oregon, to contribute to *Preaching Helps* once again. As I have learned from my friend Dr. Melinda Wagner, who serves in Portland, Oregon is the most unchurched state in the Union, and this reality challenges many of our assumptions and cherished convictions about ministry and preaching. As one blessed to be surrounded by people on fire for the gospel, I am grateful for the perspective and reality check that workers from a northwest corner of God's U.S. vineyard can provide.

The theme that emerges in these pages is how the community of the baptized is to be "different" from the world. I found three short answers. There is a threshold to cross when we come into church, a border to cross between cultural metanarratives and values and the scriptural narrative and the way of discipleship. In some places the threshold is high; other faith communities are trying to sand it down. But we cannot pretend that the threshold does not exist. If the threshold is too high, it will keep people out. But the only way to completely eliminate it is to domesticate the gospel.

Second, to be different is to live differently. Terry invites us to ponder obedience as an evangelism strategy, using our tongues to set the world on fire with God's Word. It bears repeating that we do not live differently in order to be saved. We live differently because we are saved, because we are baptized. In this kind of preaching, the gospel empowers people to live differently by appealing to the person God in Christ has made them and invites them to be. Rather than talking of what we should or must do, there is talk of what God is doing and of what we get to share in. And there is instruction on how Christians live.

Third, communities of the baptized are patient. Because we trust in God's promise, we do not lose heart or give up when results are slow in coming. We are vigilant for the smallest indication of God's Reign coming near to our lives, our congregations, and our communities. We do not overlook or discount or dismiss these graces. We are aware that, while God may have created the world in seven days, it may take the Spirit a lifetime to bring a loved one to faith. And so we give God the time God needs.

Rather than spending the summer planning what we will do come fall, perhaps we might preach about who we are as the community of the baptized. Certainly, that conversation will include crossing the church's threshold to seek out and learn from those we know as "unchurched."

Craig A. Satterlee, Editor

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 14) 13 August 2006

1 Kings 19:4–8
Psalm 34:1–8
Ephesians 4:25–5:2
John 6:35, 41–51

First Reading

Perhaps the most important word in this Old Testament reading is the very first one. It's just a conjunction, the construction we call a "waw-consecutive," not even a word by itself in Hebrew, which can be translated "and" or "but." Both the NRSV and RSV translate the conjunction "but," and this translation sets what comes after the conjunction decidedly against what comes before it. What all of this grammatical talk means is that, while it appears the Sidonian (1 Kgs 16:31), Jezebel, has the last word, she has not been able to defeat the Word of Yahweh. Elijah may be spent, but he is not broken. Yahweh strengthens him to stand, even against the queen.

Psalm 34 also relates a story of deliverance by Yahweh (34:4) and calls on the assembled congregation to "Magnify the LORD" (34:3). Like Elijah, refreshed by the divine gift of food, we are invited by the psalmist to "taste and see that the LORD is good" (34:8).

Perhaps these Old Testament texts can "refresh us" (and give us a break) as we move through the continuing story of John 6. Here Jesus calls himself "the bread of life." The complaint of "the Jews," Jesus' opponents, that Jesus claims to be heavenly manna is answered by Jesus' repetition of that claim (John 6:35, 48). Moreover, Jesus claims to be greater than manna (6:49–51). The one who eats from the "Bread of Life" will not die. Although this statement is offensive to "the Jews," Jesus' opponents in John's Gospel, it is life for those who believe Jesus' words.

Often in the New Testament epistles, the later chapters of a letter give practical counsel and encouragement, based upon the message of Jesus' sacrifice for sinners, the forgiveness of all sin. Here in Ephesians the writer encourages speaking the truth, working hard and honestly, and using the tongue to "build up," not "tear down." This last counsel, especially, is much needed and worth repeating in our day.

Pastoral Reflection

It is probably easier for us to imagine ourselves to be "imitators of Elijah" than "imitators of God" (Eph 5:1). The Greek word used commands us to "mimic" God. It is a word that comes out of the context of Greek theater. However, the writer is not urging "playacting." The writer, recognizing that her/his readers are baptized ("sealed," v. 30), expects that behavior will change. "Put away . . . and be kind to one another . . ." marks the difference in the baptized. "Put off," "put on" is a formula often used in the New Testament to describe the baptized. This reflects the custom of taking off one's robe to be immersed in a pool of water for baptism, then receiving a new, white robe, symbolic of forgiveness and new life, when one came out of the water.

Does baptism make a difference in people? If so, what difference does it make? Are we as the baptized different than others? If so, how? "Put off, put on" is not just a phrase that refers to the new robe one received. It also refers to the way we act, the way we live, the way we now reflect the love of Jesus in our hearts—we, who have been baptized into "new life."

Jesus talks about "bread from heaven" and "the bread of life." How can we help others understand that we are fed, to use a

Matthean phrase, "not by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matt 4:4)? The "Bread of Life," Jesus' own Body and Blood, sustains us. In the Sacrament we receive again the promise of the forgiveness of our sins. That promise gives us strength through each new day, sure as the bread we share on our tables (also God-given!). TCG

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 15) August 20, 2006

Proverbs 9:1–6
Psalm 34:9–14
Ephesians 5:15–20
John 6:51–58

First Reading

Wisdom in the Greek world was personified in the goddess Athena, in the Roman world the goddess Minerva (who popped right out of father Jupiter's head!). In Israelite wisdom, *hakmah* was a figure in the heavenly court of Yahweh. Solomon, the great king and son of David (also one who "got around"), was said to be the epitome of the wise man. Here Wisdom personified greets and invites those who would listen to "come to the banquet." Wisdom invites those in Israel who would follow Yahweh to put aside "simplemindedness" and live. The root *patah* means "to be inexperienced, to be naive or open to deception." Sounds like the sinner before the power of the Tempter. Would that Solomon had followed such counsel later in life!

The writer to the Ephesians also has counsel for those who have been baptized (5:14) and thus claimed by God. "Walk" in the Greek text is a metaphor for living one's life. Life was seen then, as often today, as a journey. The God-pleasing way to live is "thankfully."

"The Jews," Jesus' opponents, are thoroughly confused and frustrated at Jesus' talk about another banquet, the banquet of his body and blood. Jesus ties this banquet to the "feast" of manna in the wilderness, which God had provided for Israel. Miraculous, life-giving bread it was, bread not of Israel's labor but given, gifted, by Yahweh. This bread Jesus offers is also bread for which we who believe do not labor, living bread that comes to us as miraculously as manna from heaven and sustains us on our journey.

Pastoral Reflection

When I was a boy, these words were painted on the corner of every sidewalk in my hometown in the Chicago suburbs: "Stop, look, live." As a child I was admonished to "look both ways" and "not cross until the street is clear." Taking these words very seriously, one day I turned around from a trip to the local grocery and arrived back home without the goods for which my mother had sent me. Talk about "simplemindedness"!

We can become so fearful that we are paralyzed. We never reach our destination. We never accomplish our goals. We become afraid to "step off the curb."

Today's texts offer refreshment, encouragement, hope, and strength for all who become paralyzed by fear. As a mission developer I am buffeted by temptations to give up. Fear of failure stalks me at every door upon which I knock, every program we try to initiate, every meeting at which our lifelong Lutherans run up against those who are totally new to the faith. Fear is always bearing down on us. We began this mission with three persons plus myself, my wife, and our seven-year-old daughter, gathered around our kitchen table. Talk about fear!

Yet God has truly blessed God's people

in Central Point, Oregon. A little church, owned by Baptists, became available; people responded to invitations; worship services began. The Word is preached, the sacraments administered, and members reach out to the community. "The one who eats of this bread will live forever!" Here in Oregon we trust Jesus' word, and we have found it to be powerful and true. TCG

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 16) August 27, 2006

Joshua 24:1–2a, 14–18
Psalm 34:15–22
Ephesians 6:10–20
John 6:56–59

First Reading

The covenant-making ceremony of Joshua 24 includes our text in which Joshua exhorts the people of Israel to "choose this day whom you will serve. . . ." Joshua then gives Israel an option: Yahweh or "the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are now living." That's a call for decisive action, and the people answer that call decisively. "Far be it from us that we should forsake Yahweh, our God. . . ." They recite the history of the exodus and journey to the "promised land." Then they pledge to "serve Yahweh," and they add, "He is our God."

The Gospel writer is still talking about bread. The bread that Jesus gives is "not like that which your ancestors ate," that is, manna in the wilderness. This bread, Jesus says, will cause the one who eats it to "live forever." Jesus' teaching is too difficult for some, however. They "no longer walked around with Him," says the Greek. When Jesus questions Peter about his and the rest of the twelve's possible defection, Peter acts as if there is no choice. Only Jesus has "the words of eternal life."

The writer to the Ephesians uses classic Greek dualism (v. 11)—"whole armor of God" versus "wiles of the Tempter." The stakes are raised in this fight; the struggle between good and evil, God and Satan, is nothing less than all-out war. To a newly formed Christian community this writer was direct and firm. The "battle" is fierce, the struggle long (*LBW* #174), but God provides weapons and resources for the fight.

Pastoral Reflection

When I was a boy the great "battle hymns" of the church were sung often and with almost feverish enthusiasm. "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus," "Onward, Christian Soldiers," "The Son of God Goes Forth to War"—so stirring and descriptive are they that more than once I've chosen them for the three hymns in a worship service, driving a point across to the congregation. The point is not the glorification of war but the reality that we have a war on our hands with Satan.

These hymns have—lamentably, from my point of view—fallen out of favor in recent years. The peace movement is offended, and no one, including me, wants to be seen as advocating war.

The old saying is true: War is hell! War is frightening, messy, life-shattering, landscape-changing (both politically and literally), as weapons do their damage to the earth. I thank God that I have not been called to be a soldier, and I thank God for those, including my own father and other close relatives, who answered that call.

Yet the war imagery of the writer of Ephesians or the apocalyptic writer of Revelation or other biblical writers has something to say to us today. The struggle in which we are engaged as we face the world is not merely a struggle. The sharing of the Good News is not for temporary relief. The

Word we have to share is for all times and for all places. The pledge we make with Joshua ("As for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh") is tested, daily.

However, we do not struggle alone. We are fed continually by Jesus' word. Jesus "abides"—lives in us, feeds us, gives us what we need to "fight on" until the day of rest, the day of victory, the Day of Yahweh. TCG

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 17) September 3, 2006

Deuteronomy 4:1–2, 6–9
Psalm 15
James 1:17–27
Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23

First Reading

There is something really startling in this Deuteronomy text. Usually we praise individuality and creative thinking when we look for positive examples among people. Deuteronomy does not praise creativity, nor does it promote individuality apart from Yahweh. There is one LORD, one God (Deut 6:4). Obedience to Yahweh's "statutes and ordinances" will show the wisdom of Israel to the nations.

I'd be willing to wager that not many discussions of "effective evangelism strategies" begin with "obedience." There's a lesson here!

Psalm 15 underscores Deuteronomy's emphasis with its talk of "those who walk blamelessly and speak the truth from their heart." Several other traits of the righteous, worthy to "dwell with God," are also mentioned. A sermon on this psalm would be affirming of Deuteronomy's continual call to "remember."

Most of us struggle with Mark 7, wading through the murky waters of Hebrew dietary and cleanliness laws. It's not our strong suit, and the discussion is far removed from modern concerns. Jesus is not railing against these laws; he is saying that the inside of a person is what drives one's actions. When the heart is rightly oriented, behavior follows. Legalism for the sake of mere obedience is not enough, according to Jesus.

James is famous in Lutheran circles as the "straw epistle." Place James's letter against Paul's letters, and Paul gets Martin Luther's approval every time. In our text, however, James calls the law "the perfect law of freedom." James urges not just hearing the law but doing it. James's view seems to be the true and ancient Hebrew view: the law of Yahweh is life-giving! That message mirrors Psalm 15. Who is worthy? The one who does the law.

Pastoral Reflection

As I ride with the Central Point police officers as their chaplain I become very aware of how the law is life-preserving, if not life-giving. If not for the law some nights "all hell would break loose" in our city of Central Point, not to mention in the big cities of Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Detroit, you name it.

Moses speaks the words of Yahweh to the people at the edge of the promised land. The "wandering in the wilderness" is coming to an end. Israel will be a new people, a settled people, living alongside and among others. Israel faces changing conditions, a new way of life. Sounds familiar in our twenty-first–century world of fast-paced living, where one fad, theme, or song changes to the next in the blink of an eye, where cities and suburbs and countryside and neighborhoods are ever changing. Come to think of it, I haven't heard much about the "Purpose-

Driven Life" lately. Oh, that theme went by two years ago!

What is it that not only changes us but also sustains us? Israel saw the law of God as life-giving and sustaining (see not only Psalm 15 but also Psalms 1 and 119).

Jesus makes the point that it is our hearts, our inclinations, and our deepest thoughts that are to be God-centered, that need "conversion." Sometimes looks can be deceiving, because God sees on the inside while we look at the outside.

This is why police chaplains are called and law-enforcement personnel sometimes need further help. Peace, as in "cessation of hostilities," is not enough. Real peace occurs where hearts are fixed on God, and lives lived according to the commandments express gratitude for the love of God in Jesus, the forgiveness of our sin. TCG

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 18) September 10, 2006

Isaiah 35:4–7a
Psalm 146
James 2:1–10, (11–13), 14–17
Mark 7:24–37

First Reading

We are familiar with this Isaiah text as part of the Advent Season in Year A, the Matthean cycle of readings. There it is paired with John the Baptist's question concerning who Jesus really is, Matt 11:2–11. In the Markan cycle this Old Testament pericope is matched with two miracle stories, one from Tyre, the region of the ancient Philistines (Mark 7:24), the other in the area of the Decapolis (ten towns). These are predominately Gentile regions. Jesus is outside his home territory.

The Isaiah text speaks of a wilderness and desert. Out of barren land God will make a "highway" (v. 8) with life blooming all around, and on this highway God will appear. In that day, when God comes, the weak will be made strong; the blind will see; the lame will dance. Even the barren landscape will blossom and produce.

So Jesus is in Gentile territory, but the power of Yahweh within Jesus is not limited by location. Even on the seacoast Jesus is able to heal. Even though Jesus slings a racial slur at the begging woman, she believes Jesus will help her, and she comes back for the "crumbs."

Our daughter, Hannah, 11, pleaded and pestered us to get a dog, and once we moved to a home with a big enough area, I acquiesced. I can personally attest that dogs will eat the crumbs, be they the master's or the master's parents'. The woman "lapped up" Jesus' promise. She took Jesus' insult and turned it back on him in faith. What faith!

James asks, "Has God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith?" (2:5b) That is one wonderful description of the Gentiles in the reading from Mark. Poor, outcast, unwanted, even shunned, they are rich in faith. It is in the "ten towns" that the people exclaim, "He has done all things well!" (See Gen 1:9, "God saw everything that God had made, and, indeed, it was very good!")

Pastoral Reflection

As a mission developer, I—with the people of St. Matthew Lutheran Mission—am in the process of "birthing," of creating something. Our family came to Central Point, Oregon, from Carbondale, Illinois, bought a home, and lived in it among the bare walls for three days until our furniture arrived.

In the course of time God has blessed our efforts with a mission gathering, now more than forty people, with another thirty or so on the "prospect" list. Yes, there are times I wish Jesus would come, spit, touch

my tongue (and/or the ears of those on whom I call), and open the doors of St. Matthew to 150 or, better, 550 people!

Then again, I don't think that the highway Isaiah saw in the wilderness was "poured" in months or even a year. Seems that it took a few decades for his words to be fulfilled. Or maybe centuries.

When the seeds of faith that we plant blossom, when the "dogs" lap up the "crumbs," when the invitations we extend are not only heard but truly received and accepted, we can be assured that Isaiah's words are still true. Not only in Israel can God make the desert bloom. The people who fill our pews and their words and deeds of faith are evidence of that! TCG

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 19) September 17, 2006

Isaiah 50:5–9a
Psalm 116:1–8
James 3:1–12
Mark 8:27–38

First Reading

Moving through Mark we now come to the first of three passion predictions. As well documented by Markan scholars, they form the core of Mark's message. Jesus, and all who would follow him, march steadily toward Jerusalem, suffering, mocking, beatings, and death (and resurrection). The miracles of the early chapters of Mark bring crowds to Jesus' side, but now, as the journey gets longer and tougher, the followers get fewer and fewer.

Thus we begin the day reading a Servant Song from Isaiah, the third of the four that scholars have identified (42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9a; 52:13–53:12). Here the servant's role is to teach. God speaks to the servant, daily (50:4), and the servant listens. However, the servant is not well received among God's people. The servant is beaten, spit on, and insulted. The Word of God through the servant faces stiff opposition in society.

This is what Jesus is trying to prepare the disciples (and us) for: opposition to the word, both law and gospel. The longer the journey, the more arduous the task.

The psalmist also faced opposition (Ps 116:3), but when her/his prayer went up to God, the psalmist was heard and delivered. Danger and fear turned to joy and thanksgiving (116:7–8).

James warns against improper use of the tongue, but, somewhat indirectly, James also indicates how much good the tongue can do. Just a little spark can set a whole forest on fire. The tongue is a fire, says James, and with it we both bless the Lord and curse. How much good can we do, how many fires of evangelical zeal can we set, if we remember to bless, not curse?

Living in the Pacific Northwest, having come three years ago from the level Midwest, I see what great damage a fire can do—*and* what new growth can come from such a blaze! Some species are all but dependent upon the fire!

Pastoral Reflection

"It only takes a spark to get a fire going. And soon all those around can warm up to its glowing. That how it is with God's love. . . ." The lyrics are from the folk song "Pass It On."

Seems to me the "fire" in our texts is the suffering and death of God's people, specifically God's Son, Jesus. Look how the disciples—Peter, singled out by the evangelist—react to Jesus' message. No one wants to go the path of suffering, the path of Jesus! No one wants to go near the fire!

So where do these texts leave us and our

people? Jesus puts a very important question before his disciples. Perhaps Isaiah of the exile provides part of the answer. Who is Jesus? Another question for us: If Jesus is God's Suffering Servant, what does that mean for us who are "behind him"? How can we use our tongues not to start fires to destroy but, preaching both law and gospel, to also bring new growth, hope, forgiveness, life?

Who or what in our congregations can be "fire starters" so that evil might be vanquished and love might blossom? This sounds a lot like Luther talking about water and baptism—"the new man may daily come forth and arise." Fire and water can destroy, but they also can bring new life. TCG

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 20) September 24, 2006

Jeremiah 11:18–20
Psalm 54
James 3:13–4:3, 7–8a
Mark 9:30–37

First Reading

The Old Testament reading is a portion of one of Jeremiah's prayers, commonly known as laments or "confessions," in which the burden of proclaiming Yahweh's word is almost too much for Jeremiah to bear. Jeremiah needs a time of respite. The continual threats (11:19) of his enemies and their plotting against him were unrelenting. Yahweh answered, "I am going to punish them" (11:22b). Yahweh would come to the defense of his prophet, but, at present, Jeremiah could not yet see that outcome. He had to live "by faith."

Jesus tells his disciples for the second time that "the Son of Man" will be handed over and killed and then rise again." The disciples show no comprehension. Jesus then puts a child before them and declares that anyone who welcomes such a child "in my name" welcomes "the one who sent me." Children were not prized in the ancient world. They had no status in the society, no clout. Nothing was to be gained by showing hospitality to a child. The word generally translated "welcome" or "receive" is the Greek verb *dechomai*, which is the verb for "show hospitality to" and "receive as a guest." Literally, Jesus' saying refers to one who will stoop down and attend to the needs of a child. Jesus teaches this lesson privately, "in the house" (9:33). He is sitting as a teacher would (9:35). This teaching must be important!

James calls his readers "sinners" and "two lives." I suppose the best one can translate would be "duplicitous." The NRSV has "double-minded." This is not the way to win friends and influence people, but then, James doesn't mince words. The world sees those who get ahead, no matter how, as wise. James has a different definition of "wise." The wise are those who fear God, the humble, the gentle, the ones who the world too often "uses."

Pastoral Reflection

We are working our way through the Pentecost season on the liturgical calendar; summer has wound down on the secular calendar. Sunday school has begun; the choir is back (if it took a summer hiatus), and confirmation classes have started. People may be looking ahead to Octoberfest or some other autumn rite. Jeremiah is complaining about persecution; Jesus is walking in a determined fashion, straight to death; and James is calling for wisdom.

We are supposed to be energized after our summer "lull," but these texts are tough, even tiresome. Jeremiah is certainly tired of

his enemies' threats! Jesus probably put that child in front of the twelve because of the child's energy as much as his or her lack of status. Both traits serve as an example.

As Jesus keeps calling his twelve followers, Jesus reminds them that the way they walk is long, difficult, and exhausting. Moreover, the end of the road is betrayal and death. We can expect no less as we strive to follow Jesus and serve him. Still, the end is resurrection!

Pay attention to the children. Do not turn them away. When we welcome them, talk with them, teach them, and play with them, we see God. We may even learn a few things! TCG

Responses ***are welcome!***

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