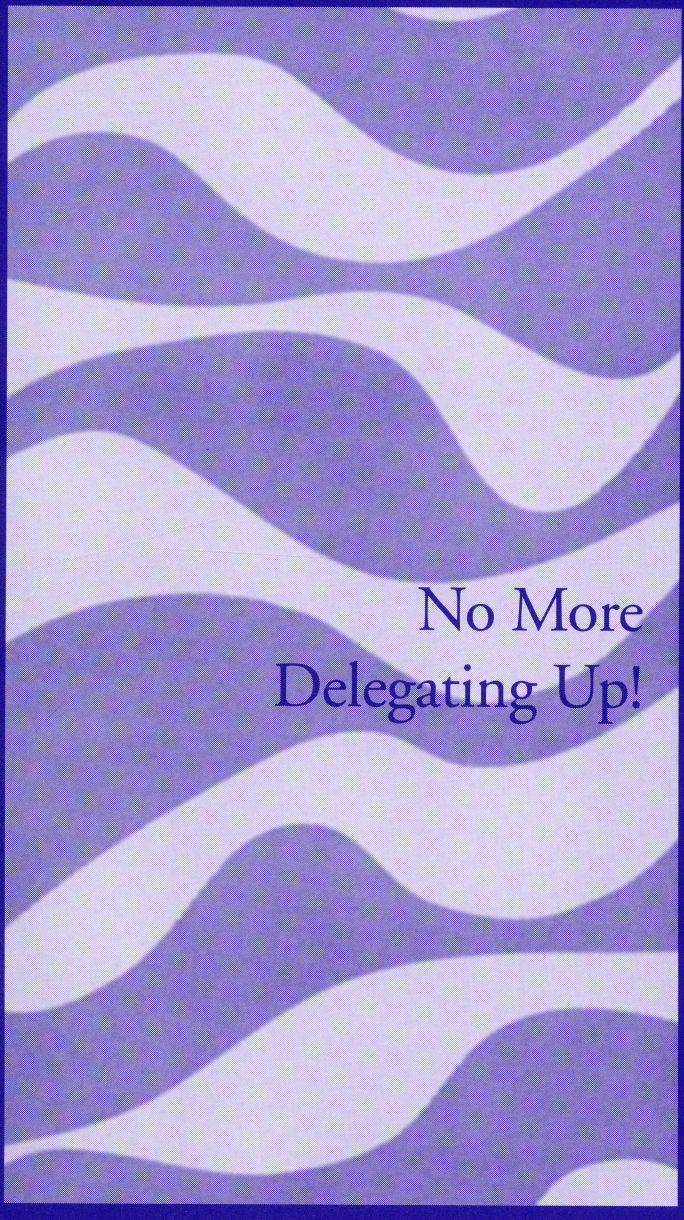
February 2006 Volume 33 Number 1



No More Delegating Up!

CURRENTS
in Theology and Mission

Currents

in Theology and Mission

Published by
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

in cooperation with
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Wartburg Theological Seminary

Editor: **Ralph W. Klein**
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
rklein@lstc.edu
Associate Editor: **Norma Cook Everist**
Wartburg Theological Seminary
ncookeverist@wartburgseminary.edu
Assistant Editor: **Peggy Blomenberg**
pbe@lstc.edu
Editor of Preaching Helps: **Craig A. Satterlee**
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
csatterl@lstc.edu
Editors of Book Reviews:
Edgar Krentz
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (773/256-0752)
ekrentz@lstc.edu
Connie Kleingartner
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (773/256-0747)
ckleinga@lstc.edu
Craig L. Nessan
Wartburg Theological Seminary (563/589-0207)
cnessan@wartburgseminary.edu
Circulation office: 773/256-0751
currents@lstc.edu

Editorial Board: **Paul G. Bieber, Pamela J. S. Challis, Connie Kleingartner, Randall R. Lee, Richard L. Ramirez, Susan Rippert, Barbara Rossing, Jensen Seyenkulo, Susan Swanson, Vicki Watkins, Fritz Wehrenberg, Vítor Westhelle.**

CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION (ISSN: 0098-2113) is published bimonthly (every other month), February, April, June, August, October, December. Annual subscription rate: $18.00 in the U.S.A., $23.00 elsewhere. Two-year rate: $35.00 in the U.S.A., $45.00 elsewhere. Three-year rate: $51.00 in the U.S.A., $65.00 elsewhere. Published by Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, a non-profit organization, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60615, to which all business correspondence is to be addressed. Printed in U.S.A.

CURRENTS is indexed in *ATLA Religion Database, Elenchus, IZBW, NTA, OTA, Religion Index I* (formerly *IRPL*), *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, and *Theologische Literaturzeitung*.

MICROFORM AVAILABILITY: 16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm, 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms Inc., 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Contents

No More Delegating Up! 2
Ralph W. Klein

Necessity Is Laid on Me: The Birth of Mission in Paul 5
Edgar Krentz

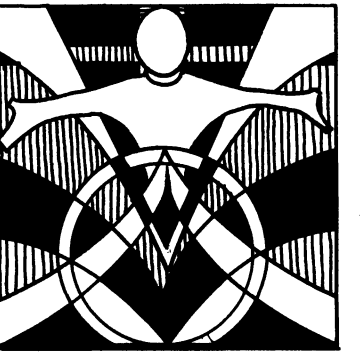
"Make Disciples"—Matthew on Evangelism 23
Edgar Krentz

The Conversion of the Church 42
David L. Tiede

The God Who Made the World 52
David L. Tiede

Book Reviews 63

Drawings by Mark Kloess



Preaching Helps 69

Following a Different Guide through Lent and Easter
Craig A. Satterlee

Ash Wednesday—Seventh Sunday of Easter, Series B
Contributor: Dennis R. Bolton

No More Delegating Up!

Currents is pleased to publish the Hein Fry lectures of 2004. These lectures are given annually at all eight ELCA seminaries and many of them in the past have also been published in this journal. The planning committee asked two of our most distinguished New Testament scholars to discuss the biblical basis for evangelism and to identify scriptural foundations on which a Lutheran theology and practice of evangelism might be constructed. Their efforts focused on Matthew, Luke-Acts, and the epistles of Paul.

Reading these articles uncovered a sense of urgency. Not a nervous, defensive, market-driven urgency, worried about declining numbers, but rather Paul's "necessity is laid upon me" or the clear *command* of Jesus to make disciples. The authors do not offer new techniques, but urge instead that the church go public from its center, or they even speak of the conversion of the church—toward the world. Will evangelism remain peripheral to Lutheranism, or will it become its hallmark?

Edgar Krentz discusses Paul, the best-known, first century missionary in his first essay. Paul's self-designation as "apostle" illustrates mission as *being sent out*. As an "apostle," Paul was not a self-appointed emissary. Paul's mission was born on Easter: the resurrection of Jesus reveals who the true God is and what God is like. Evangelistic proclamation based on Paul will preach Jesus as the one who reveals *God's* character and being to us, and so calls us to faith in *God* through Christ. The announcement of a future filled with hope is integral to Paul's message, and he believed that Christ had made a radical change in human history. Even Paul's collection for the poor had an evangelistic purpose. Paul stand for unity in diversity, for tolerance that can live with difference. Paul was clearly concerned about winning people for Christ among the nations, as Rom 1:5 shows. Mission is deliverance and emancipatory action, and Paul uses the language of freedom in Galatians 5 and of slavery to God as freedom from the tyranny of law in Romans 8. Paul's proclamation of the good news includes hospitality that results in community. How can we recover Paul's sense of urgency about evangelization? "Necessity is laid upon me!" Paul said. Often our witness is quite peripheral to our daily existence.

Edgar Krentz focuses in his second essay on making disciples in the gospel of Matthew, thus endeavoring to understand this gospel from its ending. In his claim to authority in Matthew 28, Jesus is the kosmokrator; resurrection has given him new status. Making disciples should be an activity of every disciple's everyday life, not the special task of set-apart people. "Disciple" is

the only imperative in the Great Commission passage, making discipling an urgent part of life. As the earlier sending of the twelve in chapter 10 makes clear, evangelization continues the proclamation and activity of Jesus. In Matt 28:19 discipling reaches a new stage with the target now being all the nations, no longer limited to the children of Israel. Baptizing is followed by teaching since it is acts of goodness toward the marginalized that demonstrate one's piety. Our preaching must contain didactic aims, if Matthean texts are to guide us. Jesus is "God with us" only as the resurrected Lord, and he is "with us" until the realization of the coming age. Jesus does not leave the world or the church in Matthew via an ascension, but remains with us. Following in the spirit of Matthew 28, we need to create a Lutheran identity that regards evangelism as a hallmark of its being.

David L. Tiede answers two questions in his first essay: What commission is God giving the church's evangelism *today,* and do Lutherans have wisdom to bring to this calling? We all face two paradoxes: Christendom is in decline and world Christianity is rising; and today is an age of technological prosperity and spiritual anxiety. Luke-Acts is the story of how God turned Israel from merely preserving itself into an instrument of God's saving light for the nations of the world. If we as a church read the Bible together, it will renew our faith and open our lives to the world. There are three ways in which Luke's distinctive witness empowers and transforms a Lutheran theology of mission and evangelism. 1. The apostolate is authorized witness to Christ crucified and raised. Our apostolic witness speaks of God's promise and whose world it ultimately will be. 2. Justification is God at work in history; God's justification of the ungodly is the *missio dei.* 3. The conversion of the church is God's turning it toward the world. In a merchandised world that is lonely and unforgiving, God's dominion calls the church to turn outside of its insular holiness, to be converted into apostolic communities.

David L. Tiede observes in his second essay that evangelism today is not about guarding Lutheran boundaries of doctrinal purity, but about going public from the center: Christ crucified and raised. In his sermon in Athens, Paul makes a classic Jewish judgment against idols, but he was also on the firing line with the philosophers, calling them "unknowing" in their worship even as he also heard the spiritual longings of the Stoics, Epicureans, and Platonists. Paul affirmed the goodness of God's creation. While human beings are groping upward to find God, God has dignified the whole earth by Jesus' death and resurrection. Paul echoes the promise of Jesus to his disciples and Peter's promise to Israel: God has exalted Jesus at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might *give* repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. A central benefit of the resurrection is that we also are called and sent as collabo-

rators in God's creation of the world. Evangelism today means practicing Christ's extravagant hospitality of welcoming sinners and sending saints into their callings to be the hands of Christ in their lives in the world. Paul in Athens illumines the good news in at least three ways: The God who created the world has restored us to it. God is not far from each one of us. God will have the world judged in righteousness. Our lives as citizens are called beyond the politics of self-interest to justice for the least. In raising Christ Jesus from the dead, God has given the world back to us, and us to the world.

I still remember one of my seminary professors polemicizing against the unofficial, but widespread Lutheran Übertragungslehre, the doctrine of transferring ministry from the people to the pastor. Let Rev. Sally do it! Let Rev. George do it! In every organization, secular or religious, the easiest way to delegate is up. But if indeed the gospel is about equipping God's holy people for their ministry and changing them into collaborators with God in creating the world, we, they, all of us have work to do in telling the story and demonstrating our piety by acts of goodness to the marginalized. The *missio Dei* does not mean that God is the only actor.

And let the people say . . . the story.

Ralph W. Klein, Editor

Necessity Is Laid on Me: The Birth of Mission in Paul

Edgar Krentz
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
ekrentz@lstc.edu

I am honored to be a speaker in the Hein Fry lectures this year, since evangelism has stepped front and center in the life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. On May 9, 2003, Bishop Mark Hanson sent an e-mail titled "Reflections on Evangelism" to clergy in the ELCA in preparation for the August churchwide assembly. That assembly adopted "Evangelism Strategy: Sharing Faith in a New Century: A Vision of Evangelism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America."[1] The Hein Fry lectures this year are related to this stress on evangelism. The committee asked David Tiede and me to identify especially promising scriptural foundations on which a Lutheran theology and practice of evangelism might be constructed and/or to discuss "the biblical basis for evangelism."

I will be spending most of my time in the first, not the twenty-first, century. Although I will make a few comments about the relation of the first century to our own, I leave it to the respondents (and now, the readers) to think through implications for evangelism now.

This is not a new topic for Lutherans in America. The Lutheran Church in America owes its existence to the evangelistic fervor of some of its early leaders. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg came to America as an evangelistic minister to gather people into the church, as his reports in the *Hallische Nachrichten* make clear. And, whatever one thinks of Samuel Simon Schmucker, his *Definite Platform* was an attempt to put Lutheran theology into English for America —an early attempt at indigenization, if you will.[2] A few years later, Wilhelm Loehe, a Franconian pastor on fire with missionary zeal, was sending *Nothelfer* ("helpers in a time of need") to America from Neuendettelsau. One of the treasures in my own library is the English translation of Aegedius Hunnius's small dogmatic treatise, *Epitome Credendorum*, which Loehe had prepared and published in Neuendettelsau to make Lutheran theological literature available in English for North America.[3] One of my

1. Available on the ELCA Web site: *http://www.elca.org/visionevangelism/*. See also "Faithful Yet Changing: ELCA Planning for Mission" (*http://www.elca.org/planning/theological.html*).

2. I have collected editions of the Lutheran Confessions over the years and now have almost every one ever published in North America, including the fifth edition of Schmucker's *Elements of Popular Theology with occasional reference to the Doctrines of the Reformation as avowed before the Diet at Augsburg, in MDXXX* (Philadelphia: S. S. Miles, 1845; the first edition was published in 1834). It includes seventeen articles of the Augsburg Confession with Schmucker's commentary on them.

3. Nicolaus Hunnius, *Epitome Credendorum: Containing a Concise and Popular*

own forbears came to America as a missionary after study at Hermannsburg in Germany. Thus, evangelism ought to be bred into our very bones, in some form or fashion—though the recent activity in the ELCA suggests that it is not. Hence this topic is truly relevant today.

Not too long ago I did a Google search on the Internet, entering "Evangelism, New Testament." Not until the fifteenth screen did I find a site related to a mainline church. I discovered that Perkins School of Theology, the Methodist Seminary related to Southern Methodist University, has a major in evangelism. One might argue that evangelism has not been a front-burner item for our students, our seminaries, or our church.

My two lectures concentrate on the understanding of mission in Paul and Matthew.[4] There is significant material in the New Testament that I do not discuss, for example the Gospels of Mark and John. President Tiede has based his lectures primarily on Luke-Acts, so I will not draw on them to describe the biblical basis of mission. Nor will I be engaging in dialogue with the extensive literature by missiologists on what we should mean when we talk of the *missio dei*.

A number of terms that might be used in this presentation require definition. Evangelism, mission, conversion, and the like are interrelated but not the same. Evangelism is proclaiming the gospel to nonbelievers. But recent scholars have defined *mission* as "the church sent into the world to love, to serve, to preach, to teach, to heal, to liberate."[5] Conversion is turning from one religion to another. Mission stresses the proclaimer as one sent out to evangelize.

Johannes Nissen recently mentioned four aspects of New Testament material that might play a role today: (1) Mission is *being sent out* (especially the Fourth Gospel); (2) mission is *making disciples* of all nations (cf. The Gospel of Matthew); (3) mission is *deliverance and emancipatory action* (cf. The Gospel of Luke); and (4) mission is *witness* (especially Acts and the Fourth Gospel).[6] I will return to these toward the end of this lecture.

When the New England Transcendentalists were talking together one time, many of the wealthy ones were describing the effect of their grand tour in Europe, what they had seen and learned. At which point, so the story goes, Henry David Thoreau interjected, "I have traveled much, too—in Concord." He implied that one could learn much by careful observation in one's hometown. My Concord in these lectures is Paul and Matthew, from whom I keep on learning much.

Matthew ends his Gospel with the great commission of Matt 28:18–20, the most explicit instruction in the New Testament to make disciples. Paul, however, nowhere in any of his letters commissions people to proclaim Jesus or orders leaders in the congregations to invite non-Christians to

---

View of the Doctrines of the Lutheran Church. First edited in 1625. Translated from the German by Paul Edward Gottheil (Nuremberg: Printed by U. E. Sebald, 1847).

4. A bibliography for both lectures is appended to the second (see pp. 39–41).

5. This definition is from Johannes Nissen, "The Use of the New Testament in Mission: Methodological and Hermeneutical Reflections," unpublished paper presented to the Seminar on the New Testament and Mission, Meeting of the Studiorum Novi Testament Societas, Bonn, Germany, August, 2003, p. 2.

6. Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), 18. While Nissen does not mention Paul in these four points, he could have; he does treat Paul in his chapter 6, pp. 101–28.

join them. And yet, he describes both his own work as a proclaimer of the gospel and the activities of others as active in proclamation. Only from such descriptions can we infer Paul's understanding of mission.[7]

The major terms in Paul that connote missionary activity are ἀπόστολος and εὐαγγελίζεσθαι, as we will see below.[8] The term "apostle" implies that one is not an individualistic, self-appointed emissary, while "spreading the good news" stresses the message that one carries. There is other terminology that is also important—κηρύσσω, λαλέω, διδάσκω, and related nouns.[9]

Paul as missionary model

I decided to speak on Paul in part because he is certainly the best-known evangelist in the early church. Moreover, he has been a key influence on and source for Lutheran theology. Certainly Luke-Acts has been equally important for the development of missionary theory. Since President Tiede is one of this country's recognized experts in the interpretation of Luke, I leave that area of the New Testament to him in this lecture series.

Paul is the best-known early missionary figure of the first century church, but it would be a mistake to assume that he was the first.[10] Paul knows that there were Christians in Rome before he came there. Indeed, Romans 16 lists quite a number of Roman Christians by name. Paul greets Andronicus and Junia[11] and describes them as "outstanding among the apostles before him in Christ" (Rom 16:7). Urbanus receives the accolade "co-worker" (Rom 16:9). Tryphaina, Tryphosa, and Persis all

---

7. There is no term in the New Testament that one would translate with the English term "mission" or the Latin word *missio*. In his English-Greek dictionary of Attic Greek S. C. Woodhouse enters the following Greek words, among others, as possible classical Greek equivalents of mission: στόλος and πρεσβεία (Woodhouse, *English-Greek Dictionary: A Vocabulary of the Attic Language* [London and New York: Routledge, 1998 = London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1932] under the term "Mission," p. 535). The first suggests the word "Apostle" (frequent in Paul), the second the verb πρεσβεύειν (2 Cor 5:20, its only occurrence in the New Testament), as terms in Paul possibly equivalent in a broad sense to mission, though each has specific social implications.

8. See John P. Dickson, *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities* (WUNT, 2.Reihe 159 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003]), 86–94. He regards terms formed off the stem **eujaggel-* as the most important ones.

9. Evangelism is closely related to conversion. There is extensive literature on conversion. Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire A.D. 100–400* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), passim, argues that conversion in that period depended on showing that the God of Christians was more powerful than the non-Christian gods. This theme shows up very rarely in the New Testament. Rodney Stark holds that Christian converts were very small in number until the time of Constantine. He estimates that there were only about 2,000 to 3,000 Christians *in toto* during Paul's lifetime (*The Rise of Christianity* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997], 217, note 3). This surprisingly low figure in no way vitiates the understanding of evangelism we learn from New Testament writers. On conversion in the first century see Hubert Cancik, "Lucian on Conversion: Remarks on Lucian's Dialogue *Nigrinus*," in *Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Bible and Culture: Essays in Honor of Hans Dieter Betz*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 26–48, and Edgar Krentz in the same volume, "Conversion in Early Christianity," 49–58, with bibliography in the footnotes.

10. See Martin Hengel, "The Origins of the Christian Mission," in *Between Jesus and Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 48–64.

"labored [much] in the Lord" (Rom 16:12–13). Paul himself testifies that his proclamation was not novel but shared with the apostles before him: "Whether I or they, that's the way we are proclaiming [Christ] and that's the way you came to believe" (1 Cor 15:11). Paul is not the first, even if the best-known, evangelist of the early church. Horace's ode has it right. Literature produces memory.[12] Paul is simply best known because of Acts 13–28 and his surviving letters.[13]

Paul's mission is based on Christ's resurrection. Like Jeremiah, Paul the evangelist expresses his feelings, his hopes, his plans, and his problems in his letters. He is the one New Testament figure we can truly come to know as a person. Paul makes clear that his mission is born on Easter, a conviction expressed in every Pauline letter. And, as John Reumann said not too long ago, "The resurrection of Jesus and its implications for believers, living their life now 'in Christ' and hoping to be 'with Christ' at the future resurrection and judgment, are major topics in Paul's theology and mission praxis."[14]

Jesus is raised to Lordship, not resuscitated to be what he was before. Psalm 110:1 affirms, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies the footstool under your feet.'" Paul makes clear that Jesus' resurrection realizes what Psalm 110 asserts. This conviction, arising out of the resurrection, is the common credo of the primitive church, as 1 Cor 15:11 makes clear. History is the unrolling of the events that will make that enthronement of Jesus as Lord ultimately visible throughout creation (1 Cor 15:20–28).

This hope is based on God as the prime mover of history, the one true God.[15] God raised Jesus from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus reveals who the true God is and what God is like. Paul describes the Thessalonians' conversion as their turning "from [the worship of] statues to serve a God who is authentic and alive and to wait for God's son from the heavens, whom God raised from the dead, Jesus, the one who rescues us from the wrath that is on the way" (1 Thess 1:9–10). The sin of the Thessalonians is idolatry from which Paul's

---

11. Junia is a woman. See the extensive philological, historical, and exegetical arguments as to why Ἰουνίαν must be a feminine name and not a masculine in Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005). Hence *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (henceforth BDAG), rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. Ἰουνία, holds that the term can refer only to a woman and mentions that Thecla is later described as ἰσαπόστολος in the Acts of Paul and Thecla.

12. *Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona multi*—Many brave men lived before Agamemnon (Horace *Odes* 4.9.25–26).

13. Acts supports this when it credits unnamed Christians from Cyprus and Cyrene with first preaching the good news about the Lord in Antioch with the result that a large crowd turned to the Lord (Acts 11:20–21; they were the first to be called "Christ devotees" (Χριστιανοί in Acts 11:26). Later in Acts Paul discovers brothers (Christians) in Puteoli, the port city on the bay of Naples (Acts 28:14), while Christians come from Rome to escort him into the city from the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns (Acts 28:15).

14. John Reumann, "Resurrection in Philippi and Paul's Letter(s) to the Philippians," *Resurrection in the New Testament: Festschrift J. Lambrecht,* ed. R. Bieringer, V. Kioperski, and B. Lataire (BETL 165 [Leuven: Leuven University Press; Uitgeverij Peeters, 2002]), 408.

15. See Ralph P. Martin, "Theology and Mission in 2 Corinthians," in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission,* ed. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 73–75.

proclamation turns them. The God who raised Jesus from the dead is thus revealed as the God of both Jew and non-Jew, the universal God, who justifies the Jew out of fidelity to his covenant, the Gentile by faith in God (Rom 3:27–30). Proclaiming Jesus also means proclaiming God. It is not surprising, therefore, that Paul in Rom 1:18–32 regards idolatry as the fundamental sin of non-Jews.[16] This Jewish Pharisee Paul now thought of God differently: God is not a tribal God, not the God of a particular ethnic community, but the one God of all people, no matter what their language or nation. And Paul the Jew became the evangelist of the Gentiles.

Romans 4 makes this explicit as Paul reflects on Abraham. Paul argues that Abraham's story makes clear that God is the God of both Jews and non-Jews. When Abraham believed in the God who makes righteous the impious (Rom 4:5, referring back to Gen 15:6), he was not a Jew, since he had not yet been circumcised. Abraham believed in the God who makes the dead alive, who calls nonexistent things into existence (Rom 4:17). This also applies to those who later believe "on the one who raised Jesus from among dead people (Rom 4:23–25), that is, to us. Jesus' resurrection is the ultimate revelation of the fact that God is the creator God, the source of life, in whom all are to believe.

So it is not surprising that Paul gives his doxologies to God (Rom 11:36) or that all of his *berakoth* ("Blessed be . . . ," 2 Cor 1:3–4, Rom 1:25 at the end) are of God. He ends the great Christ hymn in Phil 2:11 with the words "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Paul addressed his prayers to God, not to Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Or consider the magnificent paragraph that ends Romans 8, which begins "What shall we say then with reference to these matters? If God is on our side, who can be opposed to us?" (v. 31) and ends with that striking sentence "For I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angelic beings nor [cosmic] rulers nor impending [i.e., threatening] things nor future things nor [cosmic] powers, nor things above [heavenly beings] nor depth [i.e., chthonic beings] nor some other created being has the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus my Lord" (Rom 8:38–39).

Paul constantly reminds us that the Christian gospel goes beyond Christ to make clear what God is really like, a God of life.

There is a temptation for us to become "second-article Christians" only. Paul constantly reminds us that the Christian gospel goes beyond Christ to make clear what God is really like, a God of life. Therefore evangelistic proclamation must preach Jesus as the one who reveals God's character and being to us and so calls us to faith in God through Christ. Recall that Luther in discussing the first commandment in the *Large Catechism* described one's god as that in

16. Paul does not accuse the Jews of idolatry. Rather Jesus reveals the true nature of the God of Israel. He does accuse them of "bringing the name of God into disrepute" by their treatment of gentile temples in Rom 2: 22–24.

which one trusts, finds security, and devotes one's time to pursuing. His exact words are "A 'God' is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and which we are to find refuge in all need."[17] Luther then mentions what some of these gods are: money and property (§6), learning, wisdom, power, prestige, family, and honor (§10), and "that conscience that seeks help, comfort, and salvation in its own works and presumes to wrest heaven from God" (§22).

Paul's obligation to proclaim and activity as a missionizer grew out of his confrontation with the risen Christ, which shaped him in a way that he never got over and never ceased to regard with some amazement (cf. 1 Cor 15:8–10; Phil 3:4b–11). Following Krister Stendahl, New Testament scholars now say that Paul was not converted on the road near Damascus—he did not move from one God to another but still worshipped the God and Father of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but his faith, his attitudes, and his life received a drastic reorientation. Paul stresses this in different letters. In 1 Cor 15:8–10 he describes how the resurrected Christ's appearance to him "last of all" changed his life and led him to work "more than all"—though it was actually the "free gift of God" that did it. In 1 Cor 9:2 he asks rhetorically "Am I not an apostle? Did I not see the Lord?" Or recall Gal 1:15–16: "God decided to reveal God's Son in me in order that I announce him as good news to the gentiles." Paul immediately lost his earlier view of the concentration of God on the Jewish people.[18] At once Paul left for Arabia to make that proclamation. After he decided he had finished his work in the Aegean basin, he intended to travel west to Rome to have evangelical results there as well as among the other Gentiles, since he is a debtor, i.e., under obligation, to Greeks and barbarians, to wise and senseless (Rom 1:13–15). Paul's activity as evangelistic proclaimer was based on the resurrection of Jesus.[19]

Paul uses a variety of images, metaphors, and similes to describe his activity as evangelist. In 2 Cor 2:14 he describes God as "leading us in triumphal procession in Christ, and making evident in every place the redolence of his knowledge." Paul is either soldier or slave in this procession led by God, while the smell of God's sacrifice, a segment of the triumphal procession that permeates the Roman world in Paul's day, is a metaphor for knowing God. The triumphal procession was largely restricted to imperial use in the first century. Paul transfers the language to his missionary activity.

2 Corinthians presents another way in which Paul formulates his self-understanding. Here his language is molded in the fires of controversy. Some in Corinth held that his low rhetorical ability and his sufferings show that he is not an authentic apostle.[20] He does not come with letters of

---

17. *The Large Catechism,* The First Commandment 2, in *The Book of Concord,* ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 386.

18. See the long discussion in Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

19. The resurrection is, so to speak, the presupposition for Paul's announcement of his theme in Rom 1:13–17. I thus differ in accent from N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God,* Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. III (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 242–48, who argues on the basis of Rom 1:3–5 that "The Messiahship of Jesus, with all that follows from it, is central to the whole letter. . . ." I do not find Paul arguing from the messiahship of Jesus in Romans, though he does stress the importance of Christ's resurrection, as argued above.

20. On his low rhetorical ability and weak body, see 2 Cor 10:10. Paul stresses his

recommendation (2 Cor 3:1–3); he does not show the power and glory that ought to accompany an emissary of God.[21] Paul responds by discussing what the true "marks of an apostle" are: sufferings and weakness that demonstrate that power comes from God (2 Corinthians 11 and 12). Paul's weak body and suffering make clear where the power lies: in God's strength revealed in the gospel. He deals with the issue of glory in 1 Cor 3:7–4:6. There is glory in Paul's ministry, but it is "the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Paul somewhat later uses the metaphor of God's ambassador to describe his ministry (2 Cor 5:20).[22] He introduces himself in the letter as "apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God" (2 Cor 1:1). As an apostle, Paul is one sent out with a commission. Ambassadors were concerned with reconciling hostile parties. God has given to Paul a "service of reconciliation" (v. 18) based on the reconciling activity of God in Christ. "Therefore, we function as ambassadors on behalf of Christ. [In our voice it is] as if God were directly exhorting you. On behalf of Christ we implore you, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:18–20). Paul bases this metaphor on Christ's resurrection. Paul no longer knows Christ according to the flesh; if anyone is "in Christ," there is a new creation (2 Cor 5:16–17). It is the resurrected Christ preached by Paul who brings creation to its goal.[23]

In some ways the most surprising of all, Paul even uses technical cultic language to describe his evangelistic activity. In Rom 15:15–20 he describes his goal with the words "in order that I might be a minister (λειτουργός) of Christ Jesus to the [gentile] nations, serving the gospel of God as a priest in order that the offering of the gentiles [that is, a genitive of apposition; the gentiles are the offering Paul makes[24]] might be acceptable [to God], set apart as holy by the Holy Spirit." Paul's activity as evangelist is equal to the priest's work in offering sacrifices to God. It is not surprising, therefore, that Paul describes worship as a living sacrifice in Rom 12:1. Such language makes clear the high value Paul places on evangelistic activity.

Paul's outlook has an indelible eschatological character. The resurrection of Jesus means that the end time has, in some sense, begun. Paul says in Gal 1:3–4 that Jesus Christ gave himself over on behalf of our sins "in order to rescue us from the present evil aeon in agreement with the will of our God and Father." He uses language

---

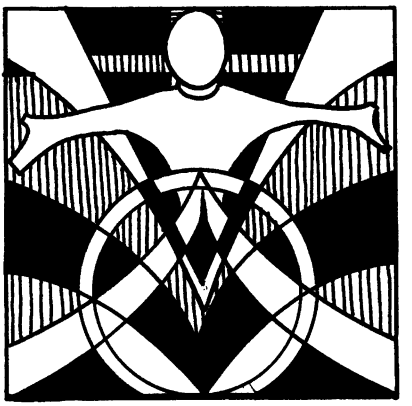
suffering in this letter in 4:8–12, 6:3–10, and especially in the peristasis catalogue in 11:21b–33. Krister Stendahl points out in *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 1, that two problems bothered Paul theologically. The first was the question of why God did not keep him, his messenger to the Gentiles, healthy. This is the problem Paul thinks through in 2 Corinthians, when he is under attack. In the book of Romans he faces the second problem, that Israel, the Jewish people, in large measure did not accept Jesus as God's fulfiller of God's promises.

21. Note the stress on δόξα in 2 Cor 3:7–4:6.

22. See Victor P. Furnish, *Second Corinthians* (AB 32A [Garden City: Doubleday, 1984]), 338–51, and Anthony Bash, *Ambassadors for Christ: An Exploration of Ambassadorial Language in the New Testament* (WUNT, 2. Reihe 92 [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1997]), 87–116.

23. In addition to BDAG, s.v., see Bash, *Ambassadors for Christ,* for a description of an ambassador's role in the Roman empire.

24. See Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33 [New York: Doubleday, 1993]), 711–12. Arland J. Hultgren calls attention to Sirach 50: 12–13 as a parallel to this priestly language, though the precise language is not there. *Paul's Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from his Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 133–36,



borrowed from Jewish apocalyptic, which contrasts the present evil age with the coming age.[25] The resurrection of Christ means that the decisive event of all history has taken place. Therefore the promises of the Old Testament must come to fulfillment. As Paul makes clear in 1 Cor 15:20–28, Jesus' resurrection is the first stage in history moving toward its ultimate goal. All that remains is for the effects of that resurrection to be publicly realized. Finally, death, the last great enemy, will be defeated. Then the Son will be subjected to the One who subjected everything to him, in order that God might be lord over the universe in all respects.

The announcement of a future filled with hope is integral to Paul's message.[26] Romans 5:2–5 avers that Christians boast in the hope of the glory of God in the middle of opposition, sure in their hope because the love of God, which God's Spirit ratifies, is in their hearts. Romans 8, where Paul considers the future of the universe, links both the creation and humanity to future hope (vv. 22–25). Verses 21–39 are a magnificent description of that hope. God the creator will bring his will for creation to pass. This passage picks up the language of Rom 1:18–32 to express the plan of God for the created universe. And Rom 11:33–36, the doxology that concludes the major theological argument of the book, ends up with an assertion of God as the creator of all things, i.e., the universe.

We may have difficulty in comprehending the magnitude of this eschatological hope. After almost 2,000 years of Christian existence we no longer think of Christ making such a radical change in human history. Indeed, Christianity has become a ho-hum matter, neatly segregated off in a Sunday morning slot if present at all. Perhaps thinking through what Paul inferred from that history would help us to recover some of that early Christian excitement and recover from the *ennui* of the post-Christian age.

Paul's concern with the mission to the Gentiles was reinforced by his eschatology, drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures. The Old Testament spoke of God blessing the nations through Abraham (Gen 12:3; 17:5–6: "father of a multitude of nations"; 22:18: "by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves) and Israel (see Isa 42:1; 49:6). Convinced that the resurrection of Jesus is the dawning of the end time, Paul regards the church as the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). Through this community God blesses the nations. Paul holds that he is specially set apart to bring that good news to the nations.

---

25. See Hans-Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979]), 42, n. 58.

26. The term "hope" is found in every letter in the Pauline corpus, including the deutero-Paulines, except 2 Timothy and Philemon. See Rom 12:12, 15:13; 1 Cor 13:13; 2 Cor 1:7, 3:12!, Gal 5:5; Phil 1:20; 1 Thess 1:5, 23, 2:19, 4:13 (!); in the deutero-Paulines, Eph 1:18, 2:12, 4:4; Col 1:5, 23, 27; 2 Thess 2:16; 1 Tim 1:1; Tit 1:2, 2:13, 3:7.

Romans is in many ways Paul's major mission document, as Arland Hultgren argued some years ago.[27] In Rom 1:1–7 Paul lays out his life work as Christian as follows: through the risen Christ he received "grace and apostleship for the obedience of faith among all the gentile nations on behalf of his name."

The resurrection of Christ, Paul's commission, and faith among the Gentiles stress the tie. So Paul confesses the gospel,[28] God's power that aims at salvation. Paul uses the term "salvation" of the ultimate act of God's vindication of his people at the eschaton. Jesus is the savior only in the future (cf. Phil 3:20–21). Thus, for Paul, we are not saved now but justified; we will be saved in the future, as Rom 5:9 affirms. Abraham becomes for him the evidence that God saves both Jew and Gentile as descendents of Abraham.

As Romans states, Paul is convinced that he has completed his work in the east (Asia and the Aegean basin), having proclaimed the gospel as far as Illyricum (present-day Serbia and Croatia). He turns his eyes to the west. Paul is no loose cannon, making his solitary way through the Roman world. Rather he seeks Rome as an authorizing base in the west. He intends to go to Spain (Rom 15:24, 28). To that end he asks that he be "escorted on his way" by the Roman church (Rom 15:24), to "depart to Spain through them" (15:28). Hence Paul writes to a church he has not founded to get an "Antioch in the west."

But first he proposes to take the collection to Jerusalem. He had given instruction about this collection to the Corinthians earlier in 1 Cor 16:1–4 and indicated its importance by urging comparisons with the Macedonians in 2 Corinthians 8–9. Galatians 2:10 gives the partial background to the collection. Paul had agreed that while he went to the Gentiles he would "remember the poor" (Gal 2:10). It was more than charity for the economically deprived. It was a symbol of the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church, but it also had an evangelistic purpose. If the wealth of the nations would come to Jerusalem, fulfilling Jewish expectations about the end time, then, perhaps, Israel would come to faith. Paul hints at this hope in the citations of Isa 55:10 and Hos 10:13 in 2 Cor 9:10 and expresses it even more clearly in Rom 11:13–32.[29]

Paul's proclamation is situation-oriented. Some years ago the Society of Biblical Literature sponsored a seminar on the Theology of the Paul's Letters. The seminar decided to examine Paul's letters one by one and cumulatively erect a unified theology of Paul. The attempt was not successful, for a very good reason: Paul was not compiling a systematic theology. He was a missionary evangelist, to use our language. He worried less about consistency and more about communication.[30] This does not mean that Paul did not think and write theologically; rather he formulated his theology in terms to meet particular situations.

C. K. Barrett wrote that the starting point for a lecture he gave[31] was the assertion that "Paul was not a theologian, but a missionary." He said the statement was

---

27. See Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from His Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

28. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel." Paul uses the rhetorical figure litotes, the denial of its opposite, to stress a point. The antonym to being ashamed is not to be proud but to confess. Cf. Mark 8:38.

29. See Keith Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy* (SBT 48 [Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1966]), 134–43.

30. It was Ralph Waldo Emerson who said "Idle consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." Paul did not have a little mind.

false in principle and also in content, for there is no Christian theology that is not in principle also kerygmatic. It was wrong in content, said Barrett, because Paul actually wrote as a theologian and worked as a missionary. Paul fit his language to his audience. When writing to the Galatians about their relation to the law and circumcision, he speaks of justification, Abraham as the model of faith in Galatians 3 (and again in Romans 4), and how these relate to law. Romans is similar, because in Romans he is concerned with the ultimate significance of God's election of the Jewish people. When he writes to the Thessalonians, a Greek city, he never cites or refers to the Old Testament, its key figures, its temple worship, or the law. In Philippians he makes use of the language of civic life to a city that originated as a Roman military colony. Paul varies his language to fit his audience—a model for all evangelism.

Paul's basic conviction shaped his life. His life style and proclamation agreed. He was led to recognize the diversity in God's way of dealing with people. Jews did not cease to be Jews when they came to faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead. Non-Jews did not need to become Jews to serve this living and authentic God (1 Thess 1:9–10). But Paul changed his language and metaphors to fit the audience he addressed.

Paul described his initial mode of proclamation to the non-Jewish church in Thessalonica in 1 Thess 2:1–12.[32] He carefully distinguishes himself from the wandering philosophic teachers, using language close to that of Dio Chrysostom's *Oration to the Alexandrians* (*Or.* 32). His message does not arise out of deceit or impurity, he does not seek a reputation by flattery, and he does not earn money by his proclamation. Rather he takes courage to proclaim the gospel of God even in a struggle, because he had been approved by God to proclaim. He seeks to please God who tests the heart. Paul's proclamation is God's gospel, given by God and approved by God. Paul's language here is unique to this letter.

But there is analogous language in 1 Corinthians 9 related to Paul's cost-free gospel. Paul had seen the Lord and so was an apostle (1 Cor 9:1). In that encounter Paul discovered freedom. In part this was the freedom to work in self-support, even though the Mosaic law authorized the payment of priests, and therefore "the Lord gave detailed instruction that those who proclaim the good news should also live from the good news" (1 Cor 9:8–14).[33] But for Paul personally evangelistic proclamation was not a choice made to earn a living! Preaching the gospel is not for him a reason to brag, since "necessity has been placed on me [to proclaim good news]. If he does not proclaim a free gospel, an eschatological curse would be placed on him (1 Cor 9:16). He does not decide to proclaim as a conscious decision; rather he is under divine obligation to proclaim. He exercises his freedom by deciding not to accept any money for his proclamation; cf. 1 Thess 2:1–8.

We need to recover Paul's sense of urgency about witness. For him it was the

---

31. C. K. Barrett, "Paulus als Missionar und Theologe," *ZTK* 86 (1989): 18–32. I owe this reference to Scott Hafemann, "The Role of Suffering in the Mission of Paul," in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, ed. Josten Ådna and Hans Kvalbein (WUNT 127 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000]), 165.

32. Cf. Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (AB 32B [New York: Doubleday, 2000]), 133–63, and "'Gentle as a Nurse': The Cynic Background to 1 Thessalonians 2," *NovT* 12:203–17, reprinted in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 35–48.

33. For this translation of διατάσσω see BDAG, s.v. 2.

central concern of his life. He worked as a leather worker to enable witness. We tend to make witness quite peripheral to our daily existence.

Paul's formulation makes clear that those who elect to do missionary work in our time are not obligated to do it without payment. However, there are stories that can be told of missionaries who felt so compelled to evangelize that they went to proclaim without official church commissioning and without pay. My father more than once told the story of a missionary who went to China, paying for his way by selling his library before he left. But such are the exception, not the rule.

Paul's call from the resurrected Christ also gave him the freedom to fit into many different cultural or religious contexts. At the end of 1 Corinthians 9 we can find the parade example of this, though one can infer the same principle from Paul's letters. Paul's freedom allowed him to enslave himself to others: for Jews he was like a Jew, like one subject to the Torah among those subject to Torah—though not subject to Torah, among those without the Torah, like one without the law—though not without law, but inside the law of Christ; to the weak in faith, he became weak in faith. "I became for all people all things, in order that I might rescue at least some."[34] Paul's freedom in "life style" is determined by his evangelistic goal, "gaining them," or "rescuing at least some" (both terms occur in 1 Cor 9:19–22).[35] In that way he becomes, as he puts it, a sharer in the good news (1 Cor 9:23). Freedom is exercised for the sake of the gospel and other people.[36]

Paul's proclamation had a social, practical thrust. It came to individuals but was not individualistic. Rather, those who responded came into a new social community, the church. Paul's standard term for this in Greek is *ekklesia*, a term with a political association: it denotes the gathered citizens of a city as a legislative or judicial body. It also can be used of a group of people with a shared identity, as of Pythagorean adherents (Diog. L. 8.41) or devotees of Orpheus. The term implies shared commitments, shared concerns. Proclamation includes the creation of community.[37]

Paul introduces the "body of Christ" metaphor, which we find earlier in Greek and Roman philosophy as a metaphor for the state, the "body politic," to describe the Christian community (1 Cor 10:17, 11:27–32, 12:27; Rom 12:3–8). Baptized into Christ, Christians become related to one another so closely that they are no longer first and foremost individuals: they are united with one another in loving service. Members of

---

34. One might also translate "in order that by any and all means I might rescue some." See BDAG, s.v. πάντως 4.

35. σῴζω is a very difficult term to translate. Our usual translation, "save," has become so immured in our religious understanding that we sometimes miss overtones inherent in the term. These range from "save from death," medical "cure, save from disease," to "keep, preserve," to "preserve from destruction." Here the verb implies that Paul regards himself as the mediator or agent of divine salvation. See BDAG, s.v. σῴζω 2.a. g.

36. A parallel idea of freedom is in 1 Cor 8:10–11 and Gal 5:13–15, 22–26.

37. Written to people identified as resident aliens and foreigners (1 Pet 2:11), 1 Peter creates a past and gives an identity to these marginalized people by (1) reminding them they are now part of God's family (1 Pet 1:17), (2) by applying to them the great titles given to Israel in the Old Testament (1 Pet 2:9), and (3) by telling them that in them the negative judgment placed on Israel in the names of Hosea's children (Hos 1:6, 9) is reversed (1Pet 2:10). Part of proclamation is giving an identity and a past to neophyte Christians.

the Christian *ekklesia* learn new modes of relation. Paul stresses that variety and difference are good. In a society structured on power, Christians learn that freedom and power are bounded by the weaker Christian "for whom Christ died" (1 Cor 8:11). Individualism gives way to edification; hence prophecy is superior to glossolalia. New relationships exist in the community: "For as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is no slave, no free person, there is not male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27–28). There is a new equality of wife and husband in marriage (1 Cor 7:3–4). Philemon receives Onesimus back as a beloved brother, not a slave (v. 16). Unity wipes out ethnic, social, and biological differences.

Paul thus stands for unity in diversity, for tolerance that can live with difference. The key passage, though by no means the only one in Paul's letters, is Rom 15:7: "Therefore, welcome one another, in the same way that Christ welcomed you for the glory of God[38] (15:7–9). In the immediate context Paul applies this concept of acceptance to the equality of Jews and Gentiles. But as we consider his letters, we conclude that it has much wider application. Liberty is valued by Paul, as Gal 5:1 makes clear. Liberty prizes difference.

Such unity in diversity certainly applies to worship, as 1 Corinthians 8–14 illustrates. Worship changes. As Paul puts it in Rom 12:1–2, worship now is a "living sacrifice," the worship that agrees with the basic account of Christianity, the λόγος. Such worship means new standards of life, not conforming to the world but being metamorphosed so that one approves what is good and acceptable to God and fully developed (morally).[39] Women lead public worship, praying and prophesying as leaders of the community (1 Cor 11:2–16); Paul assumes that they do, while giving the conditions under which they may lead in worship. The Corinthian penchant for individualism in worship led to a divisive Lord's Supper, which Paul countered by recalling that the loaf means the community (1 Cor 10:16–17).[40] To eat without concern for all others, including the socially marginalized in the community, would bring judgment in the form of sickness and even death (1 Cor 11:27–30). The more excellent way for community life is love (1 Cor 13:13).

Paul's letters show us a man who traveled widely, founding churches over an area about half the size of the United States. Some have held that Paul went only to areas where no missionary had been before him.[41] The discussion of Romans above makes clear that Paul did consciously move into new areas. 1 Corinthians makes clear that both Peter and Apollos also had gained converts in Corinth, while Paul looked forward to proclaiming the good news in Rome, which had house churches before he got there. He did not restrict himself to virgin territory.

---

38. See Robert Jewett, *Christian Tolerance: Paul's Message to the Modern Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982) 23–42.

39. The term is τέλειος. On this passage see Ernst Käsemann, "Worship in Everyday Life: A Note on Romans 12," in *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 188–95.

40. Note that Paul assumes that one loaf will be enough for the community, an indication of the size of the Corinthian house church. One might ask how we preserve this symbolism in our Lord's Supper's practice of using wafers, individual pieces of tasteless bread.

41. See the summary of scholars who hold this position in I. Howard Marshall, "Who Were the Evangelists?" in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles,"* ed. Ådna and Kvalbein, 252–56.

Run-of-the-mill Christians and mission in Paul's letters

In the comic strip *Sherman on the Mount* Walt Lee has the angel Sherman ask the Lord "Am I doing a good job as an angel?" The answer comes from a cloud: "You're doing fine."

Sherman: "You want me to keep the faith, right?" to which God responds "Nope. Spread it around."

We have discussed Paul's life and activity as evangelistic proclaimer of the gospel. But did non-apostles, average Christians, "spread it around?" Paul nowhere expressly states that all Christians should witness to their faith. But there are indications in his letters that he both accepts and approves such activity by others. As John Dickson puts it, "Paul conceived of his coworkers' involvement in mission as similar to his own. They too were to "herald the gospel.'"[42]

Paul was not a lone ranger with an exaggerated ego. His letters make clear that he is a very social person who works with others. When Paul came to Troas while Titus was on a mission to Corinth, he was unable to take advantage of a missionary opportunity because he did not find Titus there. "Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and a door was opened in the Lord for me, I had no ease for my spirit because I did not find Titus, my brother, there; on the contrary, giving some directives to them I went off to Macedonia (2 Cor 2:12–13). Because of his concern for the Corinthians Paul was unable to respond to a promising evangelistic opportunity.

Many of Paul's letters make clear that he valued coworkers, both men and women. His earliest letter is addressed to the Thessalonians from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1), while he lists Sosthenes in 1 Cor 1:1 and Timothy in 2 Cor 1:1 and Phil 1:1 as co-senders of those letters. Titus functions as his emissary to the Corinthians, as 2 Cor 2:12–13 and 7:5–6 make clear. In Phil 2:19 he describes Timothy as unique in his concern for the Philippians. They will recognize that he has been tested and approved.

Paul recognizes a number of women as workers alongside him.[43] In addition to those named as workers in the gospel before him in Romans 16, he calls Euodia and Syntyche[44] persons "who have struggled together with me and Clement and the rest of my co-workers" (Phil 4:3).[45] He identifies Phoebe as his patroness in Chenchrea, which implies some wealth and higher social status; she clearly has a key role in the

---

42. John P. Dickson, *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities* (WUNT, 2. Reihe 159 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003]), 91.

43. The literature on Paul's view of women is immense. What I say in the text is based on the seven letters all scholars agree are by Paul. If one uses the entire Pauline corpus, one comes to different conclusions. See Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Women in the Pauline Mission," in *The Gospel to the Nations*, ed. Bolt and Thompson, 221–47, who stresses the subservience of women to men in the church. He argues that the church as God's house will have the same social structure as the household in the Roman world.

44. The names of these two women do not occur in Acts 16:11–40 or in the present corpus of inscriptions from Philippi gathered by Peter Pilhofer in *Philippi*. Band II: *Katalog der Inschriften von Philippi* (WUNT 119 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000]). Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), 533, notes that the names are frequent in inscriptions with different provenance. It is pure speculation to regard one of them as Lydia, who is important in Acts 16.

45. Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998]), 5, calls attention to "the relatively prominent status of women in Macedonia and Thyatira" (see also pp. 8 and 18). Paul has

The overriding principle is that the proclamation of Christ go on. Paul does not place his person ahead of the mission.

church there and most likely carried Paul's letter to Rome, a role that elsewhere men who were Paul's coworkers played. It is not absolutely certain that Chloe was a Christian, though it is likely, given that people (most likely slaves) from her household brought information about the situation in Corinth to Paul. It is clear that women were active in leadership in Paul's churches.

Perhaps the most striking example of Paul's attitude in this respect shows up in Philippians 1. Paul is under house arrest, most likely in *custodia libera*, where he has some freedom. Under these conditions he can still report that his situation has "turned out to advance the gospel" (Phil 1:12) in two ways: first, that his imprisonment is in Christ has become clear to the entire Praetorian (Guard?), and second, his imprisonment has stimulated others to proclaim Christ—some from love, others from "selfish ambition" (Phil 1:16–17),[46] since they think they can cause Paul distress in his imprisonment. Paul's reaction is "So What! Whether on a pretext or truly, Christ is being proclaimed, and in that I take joy." The overriding principle that puts these actions into perspective is that the proclamation of Christ go on. Paul does not place his person ahead of the mission.

Was Paul alone in his urgency to evangelize? Martin Goodman says "The evidence is remarkably exiguous, but there is just enough to suggest that some, if not necessarily many, Christians *in Paul's time* shared his missionary assumptions, even if they rarely (if ever) took such active steps as he did to win proselytes to the Christian faith."[47] Some evidence is in two smaller Pauline letters, which indicates how proclamation of the gospel was carried on by people whom Richard Caemmerer some years ago termed "the great unwashed," the nameless members of Pauline churches in contradistinction to the named apostles Paul, Peter, and the like. In 1 Thessalonians Paul describes the members of that congregation as models for all the "believers in Macedonia and Achaia." Their account of how they turned to God echoed out (as a form of instruction or teaching)[48] the account about God so that Paul has no need to speak about it (1 Thess 1:7–9). The Thessalonians simply could not keep quiet about their new understanding of God and his resurrected Son—though Paul exaggerates the amount of reaction it got. He was, after all, proclaiming the gospel in Corinth when

---

contact with an amazing number of women in that society; it may be a mark of their relatively low social status. Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 100–102, interprets Paul's advice to "most noble yoke fellow" as an attempt to avoid litigation in the courts of Philippi and so to avoid a public display of disunity, a civic vice.

46. So BDAG, s.v. But Danker also allows for the translation "contentiousness" or "strife."

47. Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 106.

48. See BDAG, s.v.

he wrote these words. But Paul clearly approves of what the Thessalonians are doing. J. Ware holds that 1 Thessalonians gives us a unique insight into Paul's expectations of missionary involvement on the part of his congregations.[49] They are presented as a model of what activity should characterize Paul's congregations.

But there is a congregation that exemplifies a different form of evangelistic action. The church at Philippi demonstrates another way in which a local Pauline community participated in missionary evangelization. In Philippians Paul uses many words formed on the stem **koinwn-*. He thanks God for their partnership (κοινωνία) for the gospel ever since they became Christian (Phil 1:5). They had him in their hearts in his chains and in his defense and ratification of the gospel, fellow partners (συγκοινωνούς) of his grace (or does he by χάρις here mean gift, i.e., apostleship, as in Rom 1: 5?). This is not an abstraction. They were the only congregation from which, so far as we know, Paul accepted money. They had sent money to him twice when he was in Thessalonica (Phil 4:15–16), and most recently Epaphroditus had been their emissary (ambassador) and liturgist of Paul's need in prison (Phil 2:25)[50] by bringing a gift of money (Phil 4:18). Paul describes their action in cultic terms as an act of worship. Why did Paul accept money from the Philippians, when he told the Corinthians that it was a principle that he would not do so? Apparently no other city congregation interpreted it as a partnership in proclamation (cf. Phil 4:15). They could not travel; they could support.

These two congregations are the models for congregational action today too. In evangelism one does what one can. If you cannot open a new parish, support someone who can; if you cannot be a full-time professional worker in the church, witness to Christ where you are. That is what the Thessalonians and Paul did.

The Pauline assemblies met in houses, not in buildings set apart for Christian worship. It appears also that the Lord's Supper was celebrated early on in homes within the context of a meal. When Paul discusses glossolalia in 1 Corinthians 14, it is clear that non-Christians are present when the entire assembly gathers (1Cor 14:23–25). In a fascinating book John Koenig argues that the Eucharist has significance for Christian mission.[51] Koenig's work deserves careful reflection, since his interpretation does not correlate well with the manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper in many congregations today.

Another aspect of early Christianity deserves mention: the house church and its significance for evangelism.[52] We know

---

49. J. Ware, "The Thessalonians as a Missionary Congregation: 1 Thessalonians 1: 5–8," *ZNW* 83 (1992): 126–31.

50. The two terms ἀπόστολος and λειτουργός come from urban civic life. The first is a term for an ambassador; the second describes a citizen who has done a major civic service. Ambassadors were usually more wealthy individuals who could pay their own travel expenses. See Bash, *Ambassadors for Christ*, 62–64.

51. John Koenig, *The Feast of the World's Redemption: Eucharistic Origins and Christian Mission* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000).

52. See Roger W. Gehring, *Hausgemeinde und Mission: Die Bedeutung antiker Häuser und Hausgemeinden—von Jesus bis Paulus* (Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 2000), especially pp. 220-384; translated as *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004). See also the review by Christoph Stenschke, "Neuere Arbeiten und Tendenzen zur Mission im Neuen Testament," *European Journal of Theology* 12 (2003): 12–13.

that Prisca and Aquila hosted house churches in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:19) and Rome (Rom 16:3–5), while Nympha hosted one in Laodicea (Col 4:15) and Philemon one in Colossae (Philemon 2).[53] Paul probably shared in both living quarters and work space with Aquila and Prisca.[54] At Corinth Paul "baptized the house[hold] of Stephanos (1 Cor 1:16), and, as 1 Cor 16: 15–16 makes clear, his "house" played a leading role in the Corinthian church. Paul did not describe his audience in Rome as *the* church there but simply as "all those in Rome beloved of God, called saints," which gives credence to the idea that Rome had a number of house churches. Thus it is not surprising that Paul three times uses the expression ἡ κατὰ οἰκίαν ἐκκλησία (Rom 16:3, 5; 1 Cor 16:19; Philemon 1f. cf. Col 4:15), "the church in someone's house."

Roger Gehring argues that houses were the staging point for all local and extra-local mission.[55]

> These small cells, however, were house churches. In the Pauline mission, houses served not only as meeting places for the worship services but also as Missional support bases that provided the personpower for Missional outreach to the city and beyond. Providing personpower in this way was made possible by the economic and social resources of the ancient *oikos*. (p. 182)[56]

Paul's travels depended on the "guest friendship" (ξενία) of Christians. His letters were written to communities that met in house churches for worship, and the travels of his companions probably also relied on such hospitality. Thus he writes a letter of recommendation for Phoebe, who carries his letter to Rome (Rom 16:1–2), to insure a hospitable welcome. The Greek and Roman household was a key ingredient in early Christian evangelism.[57]

This implies both that hospitality was an important aspect of early evangelism and that house churches, being small, would be communities in which Christians knew and easily supported one another in the faith. Such small gatherings were described by fictive family language—e.g., with the use of the term "father" for God and "brothers" for other Christians. I leave it to modern sociologists of religion to ask what this implies about the ideal size of congregations today for both effective evangelism and community maintenance.

---

53. According to Acts 16:14 Lydia also hosted a house church after her conversion; in Acts 16:29–34 the jailor of Philippi converts along with his entire household, and Jason in Acts 17:1–9 hosts Paul in Thessalonica. Gehring, 224–38, argues for the historicity of these accounts for reconstructing the house as influential in the Pauline mission. The house church may well have offered many women the locale for evangelistic activity, e.g., Lydia (Acts 16:15), Nympha (Col 4:15), and Prisca (Rom 16:3–4). See for extensive documentation from the New Testament and the Greco-Roman world Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald, with Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

54. Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 192, describes the size of "shops" in Corinth.

55. Gehring, 315, cites this phrase from W. Vogler, "Die Bedeutung der urchristlichen Hausgemeinden für die Ausbreitung des Evangeliums," *ThLZ* 11 (1982) 790.

56. "Diese Keimzellen aber waren die Hausgemeinden. Denn Häuser dienten in der paulinischen Mission als Missionsstützpunkte, nicht nur als gottesdienstliche Versammlungsräume, sondern auch dazu, dass sie Mitarbeiter für die Mission in der Stadt und deren Umland bereitestellten. . . . Diese Bereitstellung von Mitarbeitern ist auf der wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Grundlage des antiken Oikos ermöglicht worden" (pp. 315–16 in the German original).

57. Bruce Button and Fika J. Van Rensburg support this conclusion in "The 'House Churches' in Corinth," *Neotestamentica* 37 (2003): 1–28. They say "All in all it would

Conclusion

At the beginning of this lecture I cited the fourfold description of mission by Johannes Nissen. He did not credit Paul as typical of any one of the four. And it is good he did not, for Paul exemplifies each of the four in some way or another. Recall what he said:

1. Mission is *being sent out* (especially the Fourth Gospel). Paul's self-designation "apostle" and use of ambassador terminology demonstrates that he fits this description.

2. Mission is *making disciples* of all nations (cf. the Gospel of Matthew). While Paul does not use the term "disciple," he clearly is concerned with winning people for Christ among the nations, as Rom 1:5, for example, shows.

3. Mission is *deliverance and emancipatory action* (cf. the Gospel of Luke). Paul's use of the language of freedom in Galatians 5 and of slavery to God as freedom from the tyranny of law, sin and death in Rom 8:2, a summary of Romans 5–7, demonstrates. This implies ongoing activity in the local community to maintain people within the group.

4. Mission is *witness* (especially Acts and the Fourth Gospel).[58] While Paul does not stress the term "testify," his description of his activity as "proclamation of good news" correlates well with Nissen's point. Witness includes hospitality that results in community.

Given these four insights one might ask questions today about our local communities, our parishes. What might the optimum size for such a community be, if it is to show true hospitality and create familial interrelationships? If the house-church structure is not practicable in our world, what do we do to create its benefits?
How do we express in down-to-earth manner the inclusive nature of the gospel whose liberating and equalizing power we claim? How should we describe ministry in Pauline terms? How do we show the liberating power of our gospel in concrete situations where we live?

Perhaps most important of all, how can we recover Paul's sense of urgency about evangelization? "Necessity is laid upon me!" he said. Paul cannot but evangelize; for him it comes with the turf. In that way Paul serves well as model of evangelistic activity for us, with the motivation made clear. The twenty-first–century problem for us today is to recover in some fashion the excitement and commitment of Paul and his coworkers for spreading the good news

The answer may lie in words my teacher of New Testament—and later colleague and neighbor—Martin Franzmann penned:

Give us lips to sing thy glory,
Tongues thy mercy to proclaim.
Lips that shout the hope that fills us,
Mouths to speak thy holy name.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
May the light which thou dost send
Fill our songs with alleluias,
alleluias without end![59]

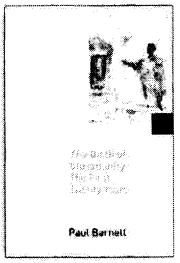
---

seem that Paul made use of the household in every possible way for spreading the gospel and instructing believers. . . . Households provided networks of relationships (both internally and externally) which provided lines of communication for evangelism and for the instruction of believers" (p. 26).

58. Nissen, *New Testament and Mission*, 18. While Nissen does not mention Paul in these four points, he could have; he does treat Paul in his chapter 6, pp. 101–28.

59. Martin Franzmann, "Thy Strong Word," stanza 5, *Lutheran Book of Worship*, #233.

RECENT BOOKS FROM EERDMANS



THE BIRTH OF CHRISTIANITY

The First Twenty Years

AFTER JESUS: VOLUME 1

PAUL BARNETT

"Critically acute, historically perceptive, and highly readable, this work provides one of the best concise treatments of the earliest years of the Christian mission. . . . A good read and an instructive guide for specialists, students, and laity alike." — E. EARLE ELLIS

ISBN 0-8028-2781-0 • 240 pages • paperback • $15.00



CONTOURS OF CHRISTOLOGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

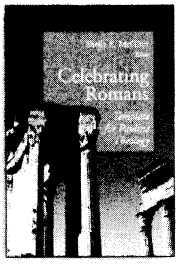
MCMASTER NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

RICHARD N. LONGENECKER, editor

"Informed by recent scholarship, these writers move beyond academic disputations and arrive at findings useful to ministers, students, and all others who would like to sharpen their grasp of the identity of the Christ."

— ROBERT W. YARBROUGH

ISBN 0-8028-1014-4 • 359 pages • paperback • $28.00



CELEBRATING ROMANS

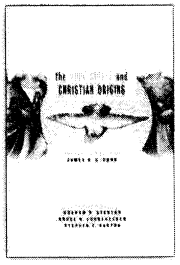
Template for Pauline Theology

Essays in Honor of Robert Jewett

SHEILA E. MCGINN, editor

Celebrating Robert Jewett's lifelong interest in Romans, this book reviews — and significantly advances — five fruitful approaches to Paul's most influential work.

ISBN 0-8028-2839-6 • 296 pages • hardcover • $36.00



THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

Essays in Honor of James D. G. Dunn

GRAHAM N. STANTON, BRUCE W. LONGENECKER, and **STEPHEN C. BARTON,** editors

Written by twenty-seven leading scholars, this singular volume probes deep into the nascent Christian communities and their writings and investigates the early Christians' convictions concerning the Holy Spirit.

ISBN 0-8028-2822-1 • 404 pages • hardcover • $50.00

At your bookstore,
or call 800-253-7521
www.eerdmans.com

5022 WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49503

"Make Disciples"—Matthew on Evangelism

Edgar Krentz
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
ekrentz@lstc.edu

Matthew's Gospel reflects a new situation in the early church when compared to Paul—and that for a number of reasons. Paul wrote his letters in the decade from 51–61 C.E.; Matthew writes a biblical generation later, about 90 C.E., a half generation after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. One motivating factor for Paul's ministry had been to evangelize the Gentiles as a way of persuading his fellow Jewish people to accept Jesus as the Messiah. But the aftermath of the Jewish-Roman War (66–73 C.E.) led Jews to rethink what defined Judaism after the destruction of the temple. There was a crisis of identity in both emerging Judaism and in Jewish Christianity.[1] After all, the temple was the center to which all Jews looked, the symbol of the presence of God among his people. This redefinition made Judaism a religion of the book, with the Torah moving into the center of its self-definition.

The post-war Jewish community questioned the Judaism of the Matthean Christians.[2] This marginalized and then excluded Jewish Christians, which also led to a rethinking of Jewish Christian self-identity.[3] Some Jews questioned the Jewish identity of Matthew's Jewish Christians community that did not keep the Torah as the Jewish community now stressed it. They accused this community of misinterpreting the Jewish Scriptures in support of Jesus' messiahship. The Matthean church's identity crisis raised issues that had to be addressed. If Jesus really was the expected messianic king, why did the majority of Jews not believe? Were they misreading the Jewish Scriptures? Did they really possess the identity markers of Judaism?

Matthew is the premier witness to the rethinking of Christian identity. He writes to assure this community that they are legitimate continuers of Israel. One way in which Matthew creates identity for them is

1. J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), and *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel according to Matthew* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 19–26.

2. Matthew's church was most likely located in or around the city of Antioch on the Orontes. A generation earlier Christians there had faced the problem of Jerusalem Jews not wanting to eat with the Gentile Christians of that community, as Gal 2:11–14 reports.

3. John H. Elliott, "The Jewish Messianic Movement: From Faction to Sect," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context,* ed. Philip F. Esler (London and New York: Routledge, 1955), 75–95, suggests conditions under which a subgroup moves from an internal faction to a sect. He lists twenty-one characteristic sectarian features and nine sectarian strategies. He gives frequent references to the text of Matthew.

by giving them a sense of mission in the command to make new disciples. It is out of this emerging Jewish Christianity that Matthew's mission command emerges

Paul never read a Gospel. We can infer some knowledge of Jesus' ministry and preaching from Paul's letters but not a great deal. He cites Jesus words only four times—and on surprising topics: the parousia of Jesus, marriage, payment of proclaimers of the gospel, and the Lord's Supper.[4] Paul does not cite Jesus' actions or words but rather his own vision of the resurrected Lord as the basis of evangelization.

But Matthew writes after Mark wrote his Gospel; indeed, he even uses Mark as one of his sources about Jesus, along with the material shared with Luke [Q], and adds material only found in his Gospel. This has two significant consequences. First, Matthew follows Mark in deciding that a narrative is the way to teach and preach about Jesus.[5] The Gospels remind us that proclamation includes "telling the story" as a way of explaining our faith. Second, by using a narrative Matthew is able to put the command to "make disciples" into the mouth of Jesus as the last thing he says in his ministry and to reinforce it with Jesus' teaching earlier in the Gospel. The manner in which Matthew uses Mark also makes clear that one must take the audience and the situation into account as one tells the story.

Reading from the end: Matthew 28:16–20 as summary and goal

I have an epigraph from T. S. Eliot for this lecture:

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.
And every phrase
And sentence that is right
(where every word is at home,
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together)
Every phrase and every sentence is an end
and a beginning.[6]

What Eliot noted in these lines from "Four Quartets" recent literary critics stress in reading literature, including the Gospels. Critics recently have emphasized that the end of a document often is a key to its meaning. Thus Markus Müller uses the conclusions to Paul's letters as a key to their interpretation.[7] The same is true in classical philology, as a recent polygraph on the endings of classical texts illustrates.[8]

It makes sense to read Gospels from their endings. One does not understand

---

4. 1 Thess 4:15; 1 Cor 7:10, 9:14, 11:24–25.

5. The Greek term for narrative is διήγησις, as used in Luke 1:1. The term is used of ancient historical narratives, as in Lucian, *Hist. Conscrib.* 55; see *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (henceforth BDAG), rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. In the early church fathers it is used in the sense of explanation or interpretation; so in Origen, *De princ.* 3.12; see G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), s.v. The related verb has the sense "to explain."

6. T. S. Eliot, "Four Quartets," in *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909–1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), 144—the opening lines of "Little Gidding" V.

7. Markus Müller, *Vom Schluß zum Ganzen: Zur Bedeutung der paulinishen Briefkorpusabschlusses* FRLANT 172 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997).

8. *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature*, ed. Deborah H. Roberts, Francis M. Dunn, and Don Fowler

Mark unless one ponders its enigmatic ending that lacks a resurrection appearance (Mark 16:8). Luke's Gospel does not end at Luke 24:53 but continues on through twenty-eight chapters of Acts—which also has an enigmatic ending. John 20:30–31 is a key to understanding John's purpose.

We shall therefore read Matthew back from his conclusion in Matt 28:16–20. This mode of reading is significant, because the Gospel ends with Jesus sending disciples (not apostles!) out to make other disciples, i.e., to replicate themselves.[9]

Paul has a lot to teach us about mission but constantly by indirection. He nowhere directly tells his readers that they should witness to their faith. Luke–Acts twice tells us that Jesus describes the future role of the disciples as witnesses (Luke 24:46–49; Acts 1:7–8). Matthew, however, gives us the only direct command to make disciples in the entire New Testament. Jesus said,

> All authority in heaven and upon the earth has been given to me [by God]. Therefore, as you go your way make disciples of all the [gentile?] nations by baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, by teaching them to observe [carry out] all the things that I commanded to you. And look [mark well], I am with you for all the days until the bringing of this aion to its goal.[10]

The conclusion of Matthew's Gospel is the goal toward which the entire text tends, designed to pick up earlier motifs of the Gospel. Almost every phrase in this brief conclusion recalls significant aspects of Matthew. Thus, the entire Gospel is a missionary text. Reading it in the light of Jesus' final command in Matt 28:16–20 leads one to reflect on the nature of disciple making.

Robert Smith discusses these verses at length in his volume *Easter Gospels* and, more briefly, in his Matthew commentary. He introduces his comments on Matt 28:16–20 with the words "A great final scene in Galilee caps Matthew's Gospel and brings it to fitting conclusion."[11] He adds,

> But in perfect harmony with his presentation of Jesus in all the preceding pages, Matthew has chosen to close his Gospel not with a visual or pictorial representation of Jesus' assumption of power, and not with sharing bread or touching his body [i.e. like Luke and John], but with a deceptively simple scene featuring the words of Jesus, the church's one teacher and master (23: 8–10).

Post–70 C.E. Judaism tried to exclude the Matthean community, regarding it as outside the pale of Judaism. As a result, that community "struggled to establish, order, and define (its) beliefs and life,"[12] On the one hand the Gospel argues that the

---

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). The chapters on Herodotus, ancient novels, and Plutarch's *Lives* discuss the ending of ancient narratives.

9. I treated this ending more cursorily in "Missionary Matthew: Matthew 28:16–20 as Summary of the Gospel," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 31 (2004): 24–31.

10. The translation is my own, reproducing more closely the syntax of the original than does the NRSV. The Greek text is brief, with much terminology that recalls earlier material in the Gospel. Johannes Nissen noted in "The Use of the New Testament in Mission: Methodological and Hermeneutical Reflections," unpublished paper presented to the Seminar on the New Testament and Mission, Meeting of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, Bonn, Germany, August, 2003, p. 2, that "as pointed out by many scholars (e.g. D. J. Bosch, L. Newbigin, H. Boer) it was not until the 18th century that Matt 28:16–20 became the primary mission text."

11. Robert H. Smith, *Matthew* (ANTC [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989]), 335. Also see his *Easter Gospels: The Resurrection of Jesus according to the Four Evangelists* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983).

12. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 72.

Matthean church keeps all that is truly Jewish, the "Law and Prophets" (Matt 5:17–20; 7:12), fulfills Old Testament prophecy, and is concerned for justice (δικαιοσύνη occurs seven times in Matthew[13]) and for correct living (Matt 25:31–46). Note how Matthew's rejection of false prophets in 7:23 accuses them of breaking the Torah. But Matthew also is concerned to give his church a vision: a commission to make disciples that includes a new view of God's people. Matt 28:16–20 is the capstone to that vision.[14]

The passage falls into two parts: the appearance of the risen Christ to the disciples in Galilee (28:16–18a), as promised in 28:7, and the instructions of Jesus, which conclude the Gospel (28:18b–20). The language is strongly Matthean throughout, suggesting that the author composed it.[15] The setting begins with an adversative δέ in v. 16, contrasting the disciples' journey to Galilee as an act of faithful obedience with the attempt of the religious authorities to spread the story of the theft of Jesus' body (28:11–15). The disciples go to the mountain Jesus had commanded, a reminder of three earlier mountains: (1) Matt 5:1–2, the mountain where Jesus gives the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5–7); (2) Matt 17:1, the high mountain of transfiguration where the voice from heaven ratified his passion prediction (16:21) when it said "listen to him!" (17:5); (3) Matt 24:3, the Mount of Olives, the site of his eschatological discourse (chaps. 24–25).

Both the first and the last discourse of Jesus are spoken when he is seated (5:1; 24:3), the posture of the teacher. In Matt 7:28–29 the crowds are amazed at his teaching, for he taught "as one who had authority, not like their scribes." Their reaction links teaching and authority.[16] These two mountains anticipate the final mountain where Jesus, who claims authority, tells his disciples to "teach them to observe whatever I have commanded" (28:20).[17]

When they saw him, the disciples prostrated themselves before Jesus (28:17).[18] Their seeing, reported in a temporal or causal participle, correlates with the angel's words at the tomb and the command sent through the women: "Tell his disciples that

---

13. Matt 3:15; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33; 21:32. It appears not at all in Mark, only once in Luke (1:75), and twice in John (16:8, 10). Only Paul uses it oftener.

14. See also L. Michael White, "Crisis Management and Boundary Maintenance: The Social Location of the Matthean Community," in *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches*, ed. David L. Balch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 211–47.

15. Jack D. Kingsbury argues persuasively that the language of 28:16–20 strongly suggests that Matthew composed this conclusion in "The Composition and Christology of Matt 28:16–10," *JBL* 93 (1974): 573–84.

16. A similar reaction is found in Mark 1:27—only there it is a reaction to the power of his healing word.

17. There are other mountains in Matthew, e.g., the "high mountain" of 4:8, where Jesus' third temptation takes place, the mountain where he prays (14:23), the mountain in 15:29 where he sat and did miraculous healings, and the Mount of Olives, where he sent two disciples to get the two donkeys for his entry into Jerusalem (21:1) and where he goes after the institution of the Lord's Supper (26:30). It is clear from this that highly significant events take place on mountains. Surprisingly Calvary (Golgotha) is not identified as a mountain.

18. Matthew uses this term more frequently than the other Gospels: Matthew, thirteen times (2:2, 8, 11; 4:9, 10; 9:18; 14:53; 15:25; 18:26; 20:20; 28:9, 17); Mark, twice (5:6, where the demoniac's demon recognizes him, and 15:19, in mocking by the soldiers); Luke, three times (4:7, 8, in the temptations of Jesus, and 24:52 of Jesus by the disciples, after Jesus' ascension [also four times in Acts]); John, seven times in John 4, once in John 9, always of worship of God.

he is risen from among dead people; and look, he is going before you into Galilee; you will see him there" (28:7, 10).[19] Smith stresses the sober reticence of Matthew: he gives no physical description of Jesus, no enthronement scene, no awesome figure such as in Rev 1:12–20.[20] This editorial decision places the stress on Jesus' words, which follow. The term προσκυνέω implies falling on one's face to kiss the feet or the bottom hem of the garment; it is a posture of subservience and connotes recognition of the person as divine.[21] The women meeting the resurrected Jesus "grasp his feet and prostrate themselves before him" (Matt 28:9); Jesus responds by directing them to tell the disciples to go to Galilee, where they will see him. Matthew's frequent use of the term "prostrate" stresses Jesus as the object of such worship. Their action prepares the reader for Jesus' claim to universal authority in 28:18.

"But some doubted" (ἐδίστασαν, 28:17). This Greek word occurs only twice in the New Testament, both in Matthew (14:31; 28:17). The term can mean either to doubt or to hesitate, that is "be uncertain about a particular course of action."[22] Both passages describe a disciple's hesitation or doubt: Peter's in 14:31 and vaguely "some disciples" in 28:17. Given Andrew Overman's interpretation of the situation facing Matthew's church, some members of the community were hesitant to take any action out of fear of final exclusion from emergent Judaism. Unsure of what to do, these disciples tended to do nothing.

Jesus' authority claim

The Gospel ends with Jesus speaking to the disciples (18:18b–20).[23] He begins by claiming authority over the universe. Smith argues that the background for this short speech is the royal decree, as found in Gen 45:9–11 (Joseph to his brothers) and 2 Chr 36:23 (Cyrus to the exiles; cf. Ezra 1:2–4), rejecting the proposal that a royal enthronement ritual underlies Jesus' words.[24] He says that "Both in pattern and content the final words of Matthew's Gospel closely resemble the decree of Cyrus."[25] The Septuagint translation reads:

> Matthew is concerned to give his church a vision: a commission to make disciples that includes a new view of God's people.

19. The term is not often discussed in commentaries. But see F. D. Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary*. Vol. 2: *The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 1091.

20. Smith, *Easter Gospels*, 77.

21. See BDAG, s.v. προσκυνέω, for multiple citations.

22. BDAG, s.v. In 28:17 Danker opts for the translation "hesitate."

23. Matthew calls them "disciples," not "apostles," though he knows the latter term (10:2). One ought not therefore use this passage to describe something given uniquely to apostles or males.

24. Smith, *Easter Gospels*, 77–78; *Matthew*, 336. Otto Michel suggested the enthronement formula as model for Jesus' words in "The Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel: A Contribution to the History of the Easter Message," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. Graham Stanton (Issues in Religion and theology 6 [London: SPCK; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 30–41.

25. Smith, *Easter Gospels*, 78.

Thus says the Lord, King of the Persians: "All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord, the God of heaven gave to me and he himself gave me orders to build a house for him in Jerusalem, in the land of Judah. Who among you is a member of his people? His God will be with him and let him go up."

The claim to rule over all the kingdoms of the earth favors Smith's proposal; it parallels to some degree Matt 28:18b, without, however, using the term "authority" (ἐξουσία) or the phrase "in heaven and upon the earth." The second clause of Cyrus' edict and Matt 28:19, however, have little in common. Whereas Jesus gives a command to the disciples, God gives Cyrus an order. The third line of Cyrus' proclamation pronounces a blessing, while Jesus states a fact about the future (Smith labels both a promise). While the Cyrus passage illustrates the dominical claim to authority, it parallels only the first sentence of Jesus' words.

The passage is more broadly rooted in past traditions than Smith suggests. The Septuagint text of Dan 7:14 uses the terms authority, all the nations, and eternal (ἐξουσία, τὰ ἔθνη, αἰώνιος), the last formed on the stem of "the age," ὁ αἰών. Daniel J. Harrington suggests that Exodus 19–20 and Num 6:22–27 shimmer in the background, along with Dan 7:14 and 2 Chr 36:13.[26] Thus, an extraordinarily complex intertextual background underlies Jesus' claim, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and upon the earth [that is, by God, a numinous passive]."[27]

Jesus demonstrates his authority in many ways in the Gospel of Matthew. The term "authority" first appears in Matthew 7:28–29, the conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount. The crowds are amazed at his teaching because he taught with authority, not like the scribes. Jesus contrasted his interpretation of the Torah to that of the tradition handed down by great teachers of the past in the six great antitheses of Matt 5:21–48: "You have heard in the ancients . . . , but I say to you . . ." (5:21–22, 27–28, 31–32, 33–34, 38–39, 43–44). Such teaching on his own authority amazed people.[28] The centurion, as one who knew what authority was, appealed to Jesus, thus recognizing Jesus' authority (Matt 8:9). When Jesus healed the paralytic he did it to show that "the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (9:6), and the crowds were filled with religious awe and "glorified the God who had given such authority to people" (9:8).[29] When he sent out the twelve in 10:1, "he gave them authority over unclean spirits." The temple authorities note his authority and ask who gave it to him (21:23). When Jesus poses a counterquestion about authority that they will not answer, Jesus declines to answer them.

---

26. Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Sacra Pagina 1 [Collegeville: The Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 1991]), 415–16.

27. See most recently Thomas W. Gillespie, "A Question of Authority: Matthew 21:23–27," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* NS 24 (2003): 1–9.

28. The tractate Pirke Avoth (Mishnah 4.9.1) opens with the words "Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue." Translation from Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 446. Authority here is based on an unbroken line of transmission. See also R. Travers Herford, *Pirke Avoth. The Ethics of the Talmud: Sayings of the Fathers* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962).

29. I intentionally have not capitalized the phrase "son of man" because of the conclusion Matthew gives this story. Whereas Mark has the bystanders say in amazement "We've never seen anything like this," Matthew turns it into an authority statement about people (plural!).

Their answer to his counterquestion would have answered their own question. He carried on the debate in good rabbinical manner. However, 28:18b moves past what is stated earlier. 11:25–27 states that Jesus' Father is "Lord of heaven and earth." Now Jesus claims that he himself has lordship. He is the *kosmokrator*; resurrection has given him new status.

This authority is total, extending throughout heaven and earth—that is, the universe. Matthew observes a literary convention pointed out by Adolf Schlatter in the writings of Josephus (a contemporary of Matthew's author). When the Greek is οἱ οὐρανοί, the plural, the term is used in opposition to the earth; it is the heavens as the place where the most high and holy God is properly located. Therefore the phrase Jesus uses in Matthew is "The kingdom of the heavens" (5:17, and often after that). The Lord's Prayer begins "Our father, the one in the heavens," Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (6:9), describing the father as the Other, the Holy One. But οὐρανοῖς in the singular is the correlative of earth, the two describing the totality of the created universe, as in the third petition: "as in heaven, so on earth," ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς (6:10).[30] In 28:18 Jesus claims authority over the universe as its lord, the κοσμοκράτωρ. While Smith is probably correct that 28:18–20 is not an enthronement ritual, Jesus as the resurrected one claims lordship over the universe.

This claim is in one sense enigmatic. The lord of the universe does not appear in glory, as he did in the transfiguration and as the παντοκράτορ mosaics in many Byzantine churches or the great altar tapestry in Coventry Cathedral in England portray him. Jesus walks up to the disciples here as he does at the end of the transfiguration story, after the glory scene is gone, in 17:6–7. As Robert Gundry points out, he does it because in each case the disciples are prostrate on the ground.[31]

The command

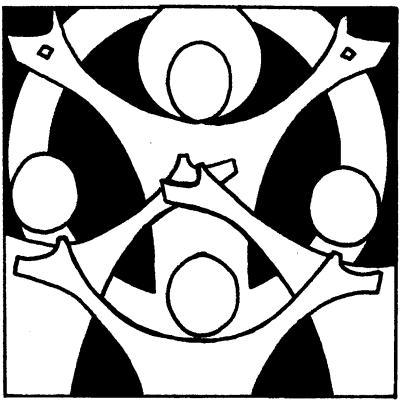
1. *Make disciples.* The center of Jesus' words is a command: "Therefore, as you go your way, disciple."[32] The universal lordship of Jesus is the presupposition for the command in 28:19, as the word "therefore" makes clear. The word for "go," πορευθέντες, is a present participle, not a command as many translations, including the NRSV, render it. There is a similar use of the participle in Matt 10:7: "As you make your way proclaim, saying 'The kingdom of the heavens has come close.'" The participle implies that making disciples should be an activity of the disciples' everyday life, not the special task of set-apart people. Thus they are not marked out as specially called people, a motif that is characteristic of Matthew's Gospel. Eduard Schweizer commented years ago that the Matthean church is "thus a community which seems to know neither elders nor bishops nor deacons."[33] Matthew does know of special people, for example prophets and righteous, as Matt 10:41 indicates. In 13:52 he speaks of "every scribe discipled to the kingdom of

30. Adolf Schlatter, *Die Theologie des Judentums nach dem Bericht des Josephus* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1932), 8.

31. Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution,* 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 594.

32. The NRSV translation, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," is deceptive. It turns the participle, πορευθέντες, into a second imperative. The main verb of the sentence is the imperative "disciple." The stress falls uniquely on it syntactically.

33. Eduard Schweizer, "Matthew's Church," in *The Interpretation of Matthew,* ed. Stanton, 140; translated from *Matthäus und seine Gemeinde* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1974), 138–70.



the heavens," thus referring to teachers in the community. But these are not positions of status! Matt 23:8–12 explicitly rejects titles of honor, saying that the disciples are all servants.[34]

μαθετεύσατε, an aorist imperative, is the only command in the passage: "disciple!" The imperative is significant, as it makes discipling an urgent matter, a matter of fact in the disciple's every day life. This command recalls two of Jesus' five Matthean sermons: In 9:36–10:42 Jesus send the twelve out to preach; in Matthew 13 Jesus interprets the effects of proclamation. Matthew uses the same formula "And when Jesus had finished . . . plus a phrase that summarized the content to conclude each of the five sermons in his Gospel. In 11:1 he uses the verb διατάσσω to summarize what Jesus was doing in the "missionary discourse": "And it happened when Jesus finished giving orders to the twelve disciples. . . ."[35] It is the only time Matthew uses this verb in his Gospel.[36] In 10:5–14 Jesus uses many imperative verbs as he sends the twelve out to preach. It prepares one for the use of the imperative "Disciple" here. Making disciples is an obligatory part of disciple life. Matt 11:1 supports the missionary stress here.

Jesus addresses the twelve disciples in the sending discourse in chapter 10 as he addresses the eleven in the Gospel's conclusion. Matt 10:2–4 presents the list of the twelve, identified in 10:2 as those sent out (ἀπόστολοι), the only time the term "apostle" occurs in the Gospel. It is not at all clear whether the term is used here as a technical term, "apostle," or means simply those sent out by the discourse.

Matthew 10, the second discourse, is set in the ministry of Jesus before Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:13–28), as in Mark (Mark 6:7–13). Matthew expands the six verses of Mark into a discourse of 42 verses.[37] In Matt 10:17–23 Jesus actually describes the conditions of the post-Easter mission; the evangelist uses material from the apocalyptic discourse of Mark 13. These verses describe the opposition to Christians after the resurrection. Matt 10:26–31 encourages the disciples three times not to fear opposition, while verses 32–33 urge them to confess Jesus before people, not deny. All of this applies to the post-Easter confession of Christians, not to the pre-Caesarea Philippi mission when Jesus' popularity is at its height. Finally, note that the disciples

34. Cf. Dennis C. Duling, "The Matthean Brotherhood and Marginal Scribal Leadership, in *Modelling Early Christianity*, ed. Esler, 159–82, and Edgar Krentz,"Community and Character: Matthew's Vision of the Church," in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent H. Richards (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 565–73.

35. See 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1.

36. The verb never appears in Mark or John and occurs five times in Luke.

37. Luke has two sending narratives—the sending of the twelve in 9:1–6, very shortly before Caesarea Philippi (9:18–22), and the sending of the seventy (10:1–16) after Caesarea Philippi. Some sayings of Jesus in Matthew 10 occur in one or the other of Luke's narratives.

never do carry out the mission described in Matthew 10. There is no account of their return after the mission. Rather, after the 42 verses of discourse, Matt 11:1 reports that Jesus left "in order to teach and proclaim among their cities." All of these data suggest that Matthew 10 contains specific commands for the discipling mandated in 28:19.

Matthew 13:1–52, the other discourse relating to proclamation, contains seven parables about the reception of the word. These parables assure disciples that proclamation will have positive results (the parable of the sower, 13:3–9, 18–23), that they are not responsible for its failure, and that they do not have the task of deciding who truly and faithfully responds. The parables of the Tares among the Wheat (13:24–30, 36–43) and the Great Dragnet (13:47–50) make clear that the community created by evangelistic witness will be a mixed body. The proclaimer does not decide who has responded in faith and who has not; the great division will be made only at the eschaton. The four smaller parables in 13:31–33 and 44–46 stress that the power that calls forth positive response does not reside in the proclaimer and that, nonetheless, the message is precious.

2. *Speak Jesus' message, do Jesus' deeds.* "As you go proclaim 'The Kingdom of the Heavens has drawn near.' Heal the sick; raise the dead; make lepers clean; exorcize demons" (Matt 10:7–8). The message is the same as the summary of the message of John the Baptist (3:2) and Jesus (4:17), while the deeds the disciples are to do are the ones Jesus has just done in the ten miracles of Matthew 9–10 and to which he points in his answer to John the Baptist in 11:2–6. Evangelization continues the proclamation and the activity of Jesus. It is to be done without cost to the hearer, as his was. Matthew 10:8b–16 forbids making a living from evangelism.[38] This understanding of evangelistic witness is significant still for us today. Christians should be aware that they speak Jesus' message and do Jesus' deeds as the witness to his Lordship in their lives and their world.

3. *Disciple everyone.* The command in Matt 28:19 introduces a new stage in discipling activity. In 9:36 Jesus described the crowds like sheep that have no shepherd, a description drawn from Num 27:17, where it is applied to the children of Israel. In Matt 10:5–6 Jesus commanded the disciples to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: "Don't go off into a road that leads to gentiles and don't enter a city of Samaritans." In 15:24 Jesus said to the Canaanite woman that he was sent "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Such limitations no longer are valid. Now they are to disciple all the Gentiles.

The Gospel had prepared for this new prospect earlier. Matthew 12:9–21 records Jesus' final departure from a synagogue. Matthew interprets this with a citation of Isa 42:1–4, 9. The citation ends up with the statement "and on his name gentile nations shall hope" (Matt 12:21). Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem (Matthew 21–25) is an action of judgment. He enters Jerusalem as its kingly judge, not its deliverer (21:1–16). Matthew's fulfillment citation makes this clear (21:5), a conflation of Isa 62:11 and Zech 9:9. Matthew omits one line from Zechariah, the words "vindicating (just) and rescuing (saving) is he" (δίκαιος καὶ σώζων αὐτός). Smith comments that the

38. I suspect that this is written to prevent hearers' thinking that the evangelizers are professional rhetoricians making a living from their speechmaking. Paul distinguished himself from rhetoricians in 1 Thess 2:1–12.

omissions stress the word "humble" (translated "meek" in 5:5 and "gentle" in 11:29). Matthew is supremely interested in Jesus' connection with salvation (1:21) and justice (or righteousness, 3:15) but here concentrates on the meekness of this king. He will not lord it over subjects, crushing them as the rulers of the nations do (cf. 11:17–21; 20:25–28).[39]

I appreciate Smith's stress on justice and salvation and argue that the omission of these two terms in the Old Testament citation supports the view that Jesus' ministry in Matthew leads to a rejection of the Judeans in Jerusalem, not of all Jews.[40] In Zechariah these words, justice and salvation, describe the coming of a (messianic) king who rescues the city from oppressors. Matthew's omission of the words "righteous and bringing salvation" prepares for the fact that Jesus enters not to save but to condemn. He goes directly to the temple and cleanses it (Matt 21:12–16).[41] The term πραύς does not really mean "meek;" it is a royal virtue, just as the donkey is King David's royal animal, as 1 Kings 1:38–40 makes clear. The adjective describes one who is so sure of his personal identity that he does not need to be overbearing. Jesus enters as Davidic King—and judge.[42]

The narrative of Jesus in Jerusalem reinforces this interpretation. The day after the entry he curses the fig tree, and it withers at once (Matt 21:18–19), not on the next day as in Mark. The interpretation in 21:20–22 makes clear that Jesus uses an enacted parable to condemn the lack of faith in the Jerusalem leaders. After the question about authority posed by the religious leaders (21:23–27) gets no answer from Jesus, he tells three parables.[43] The first is the parable of the two sons who are asked to work in a father's field (21:28–32). The interpretation (v. 32) pronounces judgment in the words "John the Baptist came to you on the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and prostitutes believed him. And when you saw that, you did not repent later on and believe him."

The second parable (Matt 21:33–46) is a modified version of Mark 12:1–12, the Wicked Tenant Farmers. Matthew modifies the conclusion of the Markan story to make it an accusation against the religious leaders. 21:40 becomes a question put to them: "When the owner (κύριος) of the vineyard comes, what will he do to them?" They reply, "He will destroy those evil men in an evil manner and let out the vineyard to other [tenant] farmers who will return the fruit in due season" (21:21, unique to Matthew). Jesus responds by first citing Ps 118: 22–23 (Ps 117 LXX) and then draws this conclusion: "On account of this I say to you that the royal rule of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing its fruits."[44] The fruit terminology

---

39. Smith, *Matthew*, 243.

40. For the use of Judeans, not Jews, see BDAG, s.v. 'Ιουδαιος.

41. Matthew's Jerusalem chronology changes Mark. Mark has Jesus cleanse the temple on the day after the entry. In Matthew Jesus goes directly to the temple on entering Jerusalem and cleanses it.

42. Matt 23:1–9 is a massive rejection of the religious leaders. The seven woes against them lead to 23:34–36, a stern pronouncement of judgment. They are guilty of murdering all the righteous who are killed in the OT. 23:37–39 makes clear that the judgment is against Jerusalem. The city has a consistent negative image in Mathew, beginning in 2:1–12. Hence the disciples go to Galilee to see Jesus in 28:16–20.

43. He adds two parables to the one in Mark 12:1–12 and modifies that one drastically.

44. Jesus uses the same term that he uses in Matt 28:19. Such negative judgments occur earlier in the Gospel also. See Matt 8:10–12; 11:16–24; 12:38–42; 15:7–8.

is a clear allusion back to the parable. The next verse says that the chief priests and Pharisees recognized that he spoke these parables concerning them. The third parable, The Great Supper (22:1–14), is a similar condemnation. The rejection culminates in the seven great woes on scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. Matthew reflects the split between Jewish Christians and non-Christian Jews in this way. I return to this condemnation toward the end of this essay.

Thus, Matthew creates a new understanding of the people to be brought into Christ's assembly.[45] Now all of the Gentile nations are the object of disciple making. This redefinition of children of Abraham begins already in the genealogy in Matt 1:1–17: Three non-Israelite women are included in Jesus' ancestry—Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth. It continues in the words of John the Baptist in 3:7–10: "Do not begin to say 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones!" The centurion of Capernaum has faith that cannot be found in Israel (8:10), while the faith of the Canaanite woman breaks the boundaries of "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:21–28). Matthew sets before his community a vision of discipling activity that will occupy them in the future. The rejection by the Jewish people becomes the occasion for the mission to the Gentiles. This gospel must be preached to the entire inhabited world (the Greek term is οἰκουμένη, the term used of the Roman empire) as a witness to all the Gentiles. And then the eschaton will come (24:14).

However, Matthew does not thereby exclude mission to the Jewish people, a matter of great discussion in recent Matthean scholarship.[46] The question is, Does the term ἔθνη in Matt 28:19 include or exclude the Jewish people? As I indicated earlier, Matthew writes at a time when this Jewish-Christian community is excluded from the synagogue and accused of being bad Jews. There is a clear animus against Jews who reject the Matthean community. Hans

Matthew creates a new understanding of the people to be brought into Christ's assembly.

Kvalbein points out that the promise to Abraham in Gen 12:2–3 includes his becoming a great nation and "that all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."[47] Luz comments that Matthew's use of the term ἔθνη at times means non-Jews (10:5, 20:19, and probably also in 4:15, 10:18, and 20:25). But the phrase πάντα τὰ ἔθνη means "all nations" in its four occurrences. In 24:9, 14, the term οἰκουμένη is in the immediate context (24:7, 14), which

45. Recall that Matthew is the only Gospel to use the term ἐκκλησία (Matt 16:18 and 18:17).

46. See most recently Peter Stuhlmacher, "Matt 28:16–20 and the Course of Mission in the Apostolic and Postapostolic Age," in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, ed. Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein (WUNT 127 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000]), 17–43, and in the same volume Hans Kvalbein, "Has Matthew Abandoned the Jews?" 45–62, and Ulrich Luz, "Has Matthew Abandoned the Jews?" 63–38. Kvalbein includes a survey of recent literature on Matthew in regard to this issue.

47. Kvalbein, "Has Matthew Abandoned the Jews?" 57.

Throughout his Gospel Matthew shows concern for Christian action, Christian life.

suggests a universal, not exclusive, sense. In 28:18 Jesus claims universal authority. In 28:19 he commands the making of disciples in the universal realm he rules—and that includes Jews.[48] We might add that they would certainly be included in "the heathen person and the publican" of 18:17, people who are the object of Jesus' ministry. Thus the command to disciple includes all within its scope, both those near and those far.

4. *Disciple them by baptizing.* Jesus' command is to disciple "by baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (the preposition is εἰς, not ἐν; Matt 28:19).[49] This is the only New Testament passage to order baptism into three names. Elsewhere baptism is into Jesus or in the name of Jesus, just as one key baptismal creed was "Jesus is Lord."[50] Baptism into the name means into ownership of, into the lordship of. The formula thus reflects the claim to universal lordship by Jesus. Key passages here are Rom 6:22, 1 Cor 1:13, Rom 10: 9, 1 Cor 12:3, and Phil 2:11. The Didache 7:1 provides the first evidence for Trinitarian baptism after Matthew; it probably reflects the cultic practice of the Syrian church and suggests that Matthew uses the liturgical baptismal formula of his community.[51] It is remarkable that there is no mention of proclamation before baptism, though Matt 24:14 reminds us that not everything is included here in detail. Matthew 10 and 13 remind us that speaking Jesus' message and doing Jesus' deeds is what accompanies the "going" of Jesus' disciples.[52]

5. *Teaching them to observe everything I commanded you.* "[And] by teaching them to observe all things, as many as I have commanded to you" (Matt 28:20). Throughout his Gospel Matthew shows concern for Christian action, Christian life. It is "doing the will of the father" that counts (7:21), not the mere confession of Jesus as Lord or the doing of great deeds. Ecstatic prophecy, the exorcism of demons, and miraculous

48. Luz, "Has Matthew Abandoned the Jews?" 64.

49. I discussed early Christian baptism at length in "Christianity's Boundary-Making Bath: The New Testament Meaning of Baptism, the Sacrament of Unity," in *Grace upon Grace: Institute of Liturgical Studies Occasional Papers 9, 1994–1996,* ed. Randall R. Lee (Valparaiso: Institute of Liturgical Studies, 2002), 99–115.

50. See Lars Harman, *'Into the Name of Jesus': Baptism in the Early Church* (Studies of the New Testament and Its World [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997]) 37–50, and W. F. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* (London: SPCK, 1953), 52–84.

51. Didache 8:2 gives the seven-petition Lord's Prayer in almost identical form to Matt 6:9–13. Luke has only five petitions (11:2–4). This supports the suggestion that Matthew follows the liturgical forms in use in the Syrian church also in the baptismal formula. See Klaus Wengst, *Didache (Apostellehre), Barnabasbrief, zweiter Klemensbrief, Schrift an Diognet, eingeleitet, herausgegeben, übertragen und erläutert* (Schriften des Urchristentums, zweiter Teil. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), 23, 26.

52. Paul uses a similar idea when he described baptism as baptism into Jesus' death (Rom 6:3–4). Baptism is in one sense a change of lords, as Rom 6:12–23 makes clear.

deeds are not enough to qualify. Rather, as the conclusion of the great eschatological discourse in Matt 25:31–46 makes clear, it is acts of goodness toward the marginalized and deprived that demonstrate one's piety (δικαιοσύνη, 6:1); it is the δίκαιοι who enter into life that belongs to the coming age, as the passage concludes in 25:46.

The five sermons earlier in Matthew form a detailed description of that life. Matthew 5–7 describes the individual disciple's life before God, chapter 10 the conditions for proclamation, 13:1–52 the divided response to proclamation, chapter 18 community maintenance, and chapters 24–25 eschatological expectation. Matthew envisages the use of his Gospel as a manual for teaching Christian life. That is important to him; he stresses the realization of the gospel in deeds. In Matt 16:27 he rewrites Mark 8:38 to describe eschatological judgment according to one's deeds. The conclusion to Matthew 25 presents the judgment of the sheep and the goats as based on their deeds. Forgiveness depends on forgiving (6:12, 14–15; 18:23–35). The church is to be a forgiving community of the forgiven.

Matthew 18 describes the significance of the community. It seeks to maintain the weakest member. To do that it must create community.

An old Jewish joke tells of two men walking together to synagogue when they were approached by a third man. He looked at one of the worshipers and said, "Why are you going to synagogue? You don't believe in God! I understand why your friend Schwartz here is going—he is a religious man. But you? Why would you waste your time?" To which the man answered, "Schwartz goes to synagogue to talk to God. I go to synagogue to talk to Schwartz!'"[53]

Rabbi Holt goes on to say, "That is not so farfetched. Children who learn to pray in community learn that praying together creates community."

Teaching inside the church is integral to its life, and life must conform to teaching, as Matt 23:1–12 makes clear. In 13:10 the disciples ask, "Why do you talk to them in parables?" Jesus answers that it is to conceal his message from nondisciples (13:13–17). It has been given to the disciples to know the mysteries of the royal rule of the heavens. Matt 13:51–52 is the conclusion of the third discourse. Jesus asks, "Have you understood all these things?" They answer "Yes." Therefore the scribe who is a disciple to the royal rule of the heavens (note the repetition from v. 11) is able to bring out of the storehouse of the Hebrew Scriptures things both old and new. Once you are a disciple, you know because Jesus has taught you.

Therefore baptism must lead to teaching. Jesus had assumed the posture of the teacher in Matt 5:1–2. Now he says that teaching is essential to the disciple-making activity. *In nuce*, evangelism goes beyond bringing people to know Christ as their Lord; it continues by instructing in the way in which life reflects Christ. In Pauline terms, parenesis (exhortation) is part of evangelism.

All of this suggests that preaching must include didactic aims, if Matthean texts are to guide us. The Matthean vision is that the church teaches the baptized, not that it prepares for baptism by teaching. Once you confess Jesus as Lord, you are open to the Lord's teaching.

Christ's concluding promise. Matt 28:20 forms a ring composition with 1:22. "Lo I am with you to the close of the age." Matt 1:22 cites Isa 7:14, the first of the great Old

53. Quoted in David J. Wolpe, *Teaching Your Children about God: A Modern Jewish Approach* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), 155.

The final word of the Gospel is an eschatological promise. The risen Lord is present!

Testament fulfillment passages in the Gospel: "You shall call his name Immanuel." Matthew interprets that as "With us is God." But Joseph calls him Jesus, not Immanuel, in Matt 1:25 (cf 1:21). It may seem surprising that after the citation of Isa 7:14 in 1:21, there is no citation of Isa 9:6 at the birth of Jesus. (Isa 8:23–9:1 is cited at Matt 4:15–16.) But the promise of Matt 28:20 explains why: Jesus is "God with us" only as the resurrected Lord of his church. And he is with us "until the realization of the [coming] age." The final word of the Gospel is an eschatological promise. The church lives in expectation of the end under the presence of the risen Lord of the universe. He is present as we speak his message and do his deeds! Thus Matthew has no need of an ascension narrative, as Luke does, for Jesus does not leave in Matthew's Gospel but remains with us.

Creating community, giving purpose

The Matthean church was unsure of its identity: unsure whether it had lost its heritage, dismayed by the rejection of Christ by most of its ethnic relatives, unsure whether its decision for Christ was really what it should have done. Matthew responded in two ways. He first strongly pointed out that they had remained true to their inheritance, keeping the law, correctly interpreting their Scriptures, true children of Abraham. They were faithful to the promises of the Hebrew Scriptures when they accepted Jesus as God's agent to fulfill his word. They were truly God's people. In the second place he pointed his church to its true existence as a community of forgiven and forgiving people whose life was given to proclaiming their Lord to others. In witnessing to their faith they were what their Lord wished them to be. Martin Goodman comments:

> I believe it likely that eschatological fervor, the peculiar personality of St Paul, and the gradual disappointment of early Christians waiting in vain for the Parousia, all contributed to the enthusiasm of those believers to do *something*; in such conditions, lack of action might too easily lead to depression and loss of faith.[54]

That something was evangelistic activity on the part of all members of the community.

Matthew's Gospel reminds us of what we need to do for our communities of faith. They need to recover their Lutheran identity as people committed to the centrality of the gospel. The recent series titled *Lutheran Voices* published by Augsburg Fortress can be a great aid in that recovery of identity. I like Kelly Fryer's *Reclaiming the "L" Word: Renewing the Church from Its Lutheran Core*[55] in that series, among other things because it ends with a chapter titled "The World Needs What We Have." Following Matthew's lead, we need to create an identity that regards evangelism as a hallmark of its being, the need to witness joyfully to

54. Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 167–68.

55. Kelly A. Fryer, *Reclaiming the "L" Word: Renewing the Church from Its Lutheran Core* Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003.

our faith as a given to all of us. In that way we would carry out Jesus' words that we should teach observance of all that Christ commanded.

Conclusion

My longtime friend and colleague James Scherer sent President Tiede and me a list of "Major Issues Yet to Be Decided" when he learned of the focus of this year's Hein Fry lectures. Here are three (edited) items from that list:

1. *Mission and Eschatology:* Importance of the "Last Things" for missionary motivation, expectation and fulfillment. Cf. Mark 10:13 and parallels.

These last words of Jesus make it evident that eschatology and mission are closely related. Christians evangelize because Jesus, their Lord, is also enthroned as eschatological judge and rescuer. They evangelize to bring people under that coming Lord.

2. *Mission and the Great Commission* (Matt 28:16–20): What is its continuing significance as a foundation text? Are there other statements equally relevant? How is *matheteuein* ("make disciples") to be understood? What does "all nations" mean in the present historical context? What do we say to Lutheran orthodoxy's claim that the Great Commission expired with the first apostolate?

Matt 28:18–20 is the goal toward which the entire Gospel moves. It casts light back on the entire Gospel. Other passages are also significant. Ferdinand Hahn argues that the key passage for understanding Matthew's interpretation of mission is Matt 24:14: "And this good news of the royal rule must be proclaimed in the entire inhabited world to witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."[56] These words stress the eschatological bent of Matthew's view of evangelism.

3. *Mission and the Church:* Is the twentieth-century rejection of "church-centric mission" (mission begins and ends with the church; church as source and goal of mission) valid, and if so what replaces it? What difference would the change make in mission practice? What about the assertion that "mission is the essential nature of the church"?

The last words of Jesus rest on his authority, which now gives a new task to the church: to make disciples of the nations around them. His gospel is a resource for the church as it does that, a shaper of life.

Harrington comments, "It is possible to view Matt 28:16–20 as a summary of the whole Gospel."[57] It stresses the key themes of the work. Gundry points out that many terms in these verses "come from Matthew's special vocabulary."[58] It is not surprising that Donald Senior uses Matt 28:16–20 to summarize "The Mission Theology of Matthew."[59] He makes the following points, which serve as the summary of this paper:

1. The mission is rooted in the authority of Jesus, the risen Lord.

2. The first—and basic—command the disciples receive is to make disciples.

3. The mission is universal, to all nations.

4. Making disciples includes community formation

5. by teaching all that Christ commanded.

---

56. Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament,* trans. Frank Clarke (SBT 47 [Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1965]), 120–28.

57. Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 416.

58. Gundry, *Matthew,* 595 about v. 19a, but the evaluation applies to much of the conclusion.

59. Donald Senior, "The Mission Theology of Matthew," in Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983), 251–52.

We can add to that. Matthew tells a story about the ministry, passion, and resurrection of Jesus; we need to do that, too. Matthew gives his community an identity rooted in the past; we need to do that, too. Matthew teaches us to form Christians by teaching them what Christ taught; we need to do that, too.

Three epigraphs, so to speak

I conclude with three points.

1. My first is drawn from a conversation my first-grade grandson Peter had with his pastor one Sunday not too long ago. He is a curious boy who asks questions.

Peter to pastor: Do you own this church?
Pastor: No.
Peter: Are you the boss here?
Pastor: No, God's the boss. You should listen for God talking here.
Peter: How can I hear him when you are always talking so much up front?

That is a reminder that our talk and actions must not get in the way of God's reconciling call to people. Martin Marty recalls that when Joseph Sittler was asked to say "in one phrase what he would do to begin the reform of the church, he immediately said, 'Watch your language.'"[60] My grandson and Joe Sittler agree. We need to be sure our words do not obscure Christ but make him known. Proclaiming Jesus' message of the Royal Rule of God, calling people into the forgiven and forgiving community, acting in accordance with our proclamation by showing God's justice for the prisoner, feeding the poor are all part of making disciples—and need our words to help.

2. My second is drawn from a saying whose first speaker I have never been able to trace: "It is easier to act one's self into a new way of thinking than to think one's way into a new way of acting." Jesus did not engage in a theory of evangelism; he sent people out to make disciples. Perhaps we need to take seriously the commitments of our Lutheran folk and send them out to make disciples.

3. T. S. Eliot is correct in words that follow close on those with which we began:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.[61]

Reading Matthew from its conclusion leads us back into the gospel to arrive where we started and at the same time to recognize its newness. It is not novelty that inspires but continuity with the significant past, a past we need to recover in our time.

---

60. Martin Marty, "Like it or not," *Christian Century* 121, 9 (April 6, 2004): 71.
61. T. S. Eliot, "Four Quartets," 145.

Bibliography on Evangelism in the Bible

General works on Mission and Conversion in the New Testament

Finn, Thomas M. *From Death to Rebirth: Ritual and Conversion in Antiquity.* Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1997.

Gaventa, Beverly Roberts. *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.

Gehring, Roger W. *Hausgemeinde und Mission: Die Bedeutung antiker Häuser und Hausgemeinschaften—von Jesus bis Paulus.* Bibelwissenschaftliche Monographien 9. Giessen, Basel: Brunnen Verlag, 2000.

Goodman, Martin. *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1994.

Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, [1970] 1983.

Hahn, Ferdinand. *Mission in the New Testament.* SBT 47. Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1965.

Kertelge, Karl, ed. *Mission im Neuen Testament.* Quaestiones Disputatae 93. Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1982.

Larkin, William J. Jr., and Joel F. Williams, eds. *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach.* Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998.

Legrand, Lucien. *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible.* Trans. Robert R. Barr. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990.

MacMullen, Ramsay. *Christianizing the Roman Empire.* New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1984.

McKnight, Scot. *Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospels.* Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox, 2002.

Nissen, Johannes. *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999.

———. "The Use of the New Testament in Mission: Methodological and Hermeneutical Reflections." Unpublished paper presented to the Seminar on the New Testament and Mission at the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas meeting, Bonn, Germany, August 2003.

Peace, Richard V. *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve.* Grand Rapids, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1999.

Schille, Gottfried. *Die urchristliche Kollegialmission.* AThANT 48. Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1967. BV 2073.S33.

Senior, Donald, and Carroll Stuhlmueller. *The Biblical Foundations for Mission.* Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983.

Stenschke, Christoph. "Neuere Arbeiten und Tendenzen zur Mission im Neuen Testament," *European Journal of Theology* 12 (2003): 5–20.

Mission in Paul

Bolt, Peter G., and Mark Thomson, ed. *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission. Festschrift P. T. O'Brien.* Leicester: IVP, 2000.

Dickson, John P. *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities*. WUNT, 2. Reihe 159. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003.

Hengel, Martin. "The Origins of the Christian Mission." In *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity*, 48–64. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963.

Hultgren, Arland J. *Paul's Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from His Letter to the Romans*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.

Jewett, Robert. *Christian Tolerance: Paul's Message to the Modern Church*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982.

Lindemann, Andreas. "Pauline Mission and Religious Pluralism." In *Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters: Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish*, ed. Eugene H. Lovering Jr. and Jerry L. Sumney, 275–88. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.

Little, Christopher R. *Mission in the Way of Paul: Biblical Mission for the Church in the Twenty-First Century*. Studies in Biblical Literature 80. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.

Marshall, I. Howard. "Who Were the Evangelists?" In *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, ed. Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein, 251–63. WUNT 127. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000.

O'Brien, P. T. *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis*. Grand Rapids: Baker; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995.

Ollrog, Wolf-Henning. *Paulus und seine Mitearbeiter: Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis der paulinischen Mission*. WMANT 50. Neukirchen: Erziehungsverein, 1978.

Riesner, Rainer. *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology*. Trans. Doub Stott. Grand Rapids, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.

Zeller, Dieter. "Theologie der Mission bei Paulus." In *Mission im Neuen Testament*, ed. Karl Kertelge, 164–89. Quaestiones Disputatae 93. Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1982. BV 2073.M54 1982.

Bibliography: Matthew

Brown, S. "The Matthean Community and the Gentile Mission," *NovT* 22 (1980): 193–221.

Bruner, F. D. *Matthew: A Commentary*. Vol. 2: *The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990.

Frankemölle, Hubert. "Zur Theologie der Mission im Matthäusevangelium." In *Mission im Neuen Testament*, ed. Karl Kertelge, 93–128. Quaestiones Disputatae 93. Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1982.

Fryer, Kelly A. *Reclaiming the "L" Word: Renewing the Church from Its Lutheran Core*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003.

Gillespie, Thomas W. "A Question of Authority: Matthew 21:23–27," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* NS 24 (2003): 1–9.

Gundry, Robert H. *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994.

Hahn, Ferdinand. *Mission in the New Testament*. Trans. Frank Clarke. SBT 47. Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1965.

Harrington, Daniel J. *The Gospel of Matthew.* Sacra Pagina 1. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 1991.

Harvey, John D. "Mission in Matthew." In *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach,* ed. William J. Larkin Jr. and Joel F. Williams, 119–69. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999.

Kingsbury, Jack D. "The Composition and Christology of Matt 28:16–10," *JBL* 93 (1974): 573–84.

Krentz, Edgar. "Missionary Matthew: Matthew 28:16–20 as Summary of the Gospel," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 31 (2004): 24–31.

Kvalbein, Hans. "Has Matthew Abandoned the Jews?" In *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles,* ed. Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein, 45–62. WUNT 127. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000.

Legrand, James. *The Earliest Christian Mission to 'All Nations' in the Light of Matthew's Gospel.* Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.

Luz, Ulrich. "Has Matthew Abandoned the Jews?" In *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles,* ed. Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein, 63–38. WUNT 127. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000.

Nissen, Johannes. "The Use of the New Testament in Mission: Methodological and Hermeneutical Reflections." Unpublished paper presented to the Seminar on the New Testament and Mission at the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas meeting, Bonn, Germany, August 2003.

Overman, J. Andrew. *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.

———. *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew.* The New Testament in Context. Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996.

Schlatter, Adolf. *Die Theologie des Judentums nach dem Bericht des Josephus.* Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1932.

Senior, Donald. "The Mission Theology of Matthew." In Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission,* 251–52. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983.

Smith, Robert H. *Matthew.* ANTC. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989.

———. *Easter Gospels: The Resurrection of Jesus according to the Four Evangelists.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983.

Stanton, Graham, ed. *The Interpretation of Matthew.* Issues in Religion and Theology 3. London: SPCK; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.

Stuhlmacher, Peter. "Matt 28:16–20 and the Course of Mission in the Apostolic and Postapostolic Age." In *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles,* ed. Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein, 17–43. WUNT 127. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000.

White, L. Michael. "Crisis Management and Boundary Maintenance: The Social Location of the Matthean Community." In *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches,* ed. David L. Balch, 211–47. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.

The Conversion of the Church

David L. Tiede
Luther Seminary
dltiede@msn.com

It is a privilege to participate in the Hein-Fry lectures at our ELCA seminaries. Lutherans always have had good theological seminaries with strong faculties, but now other traditions are watching how we collaborate. Some are surprised that the *Lutherans* are focusing on educating leaders for Christian communities in *mission*. A few have asked, "Do you know how large a task you have undertaken?" And, let us add, this task is a calling!

This year's Hein Fry topic fits that focus: *Evangelism Today: Lutheran Theology and Practice*. The topic implies at least three questions. What commission is God giving the church's evangelism *today*? Do Lutherans have wisdom to bring to this calling? And the committee has asked us, What are "especially promising scriptural foundations on which a Lutheran theology and practice of evangelism might be constructed"?

The committee sent two scripture scholars, Dr. Edgar Krentz and me, on this quest for foundations. Along with all Christians, academics hear the apostolic charge to Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4:5). But neither of us is a recognized "evangelist." At our best, we are teachers of the church, aspiring to be scribes "trained for the kingdom of heaven" who, as Jesus said in Matthew, bring out of the treasure "what is new and what is old" (Mt 13:52). We are thankful to be paired with bishops who can bring pastoral experience and apostolic inspiration to guide the construction.

In 1517, in his 95 theses, Martin Luther identified "the true treasure of the church" as "the Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God."[1] The subject of the gospel verb is always God down to earth in Christ Jesus. The gospel truth is first about God, God's will, God's desire, God's love. This treasure is pure gift to us but never a hoarded possession. This is also the power of God at work in us for others, for the world itself. "In Christ," declares Paul, "God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us." As evangelists, we are stewards of the treasure, letting the abundance of God's mercy flow through us as God makes us advocates and apostles of God's love for the world. "So," Paul continues, "we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us" (2 Cor 5:19–20).

In *After Virtue*, Alisdair MacIntyre proposes "A living tradition is an historically extended, socially embodied argument." The Lutheran tradition is socially embodied. It is borne by people in families, communities, and institutions. This faith is an historically extended confession, not

1. Martin Luther, "The Ninety-five Theses," #62, in John Dillenberger, *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 496.

settled but stirred to follow God's mission whose word is a light to our feet and a lamp to our path (Psalm 119). "Traditions, when vital," says MacIntyre, "embody continuities of conflict"[2] about the goods that constitute the tradition. The practices of our traditions, therefore, embody distinctive convictions about how "God is making his appeal through us" to the world.

Ecumenically, Lutherans stand for the justification of sinners and the priesthood of believers. When the church catholic considers *Evangelism Today,* justification and vocation are the theological bifocals through which Lutherans interpret the scriptures and make sense of our lives and the world. The biblical witness will inspire and discipline Lutheran evangelization.

Let's start with the word *today.* Our Lord asks, "Why do you not know how to interpret the present time?" (Lk 12:56). These lectures are not disinterested, secular analysis. We are theologically attentive to this age, this *saeculum.* At least two things are evident and theologically significant: (1) *Today* Christendom is in decline, and world Christianity is rising; and (2) *Today* is an age of technological prosperity and spiritual anxiety.

In 1991, Loren Mead marked the impact of Christendom's decline in North American denominations in *The Once and Future Church.*[3] When our faculty and board discussed his book, one of our scholars critiqued Mead's analysis as theologically and historically oversimplified. A pastor from the board agreed but added, "Still, Mead is right. We got the ELCA together as a mainline denomination just in time for that day to be over." Our nervous laughter was not disloyal to our church or the Lutheran tradition. God is in the changes, calling the Church of Jesus Christ to a future of which we cannot see the ending. Seminaries also will be changed.

Today is early in the second century in the rise of world Christianity. Philip Jenkins's book *The Next Christendom*[4] and Toby Lester's article in *Atlantic*[5] have been acclaimed and attacked by academics and pundits. Andrew Walls's scholarly work on the history of missions[6] illumines the same reality. In 1910, when the Edinburgh Conference estimated the census of Christians in the world, the majority were in Europe and North America. Today the plurality of Christians in the world are in the southern hemisphere.

The Lutheran World Federation reflects this reality. When scholars investigate "Justification in the World's Contexts," African, Asian, and Latin American theologians bring life and insight to worn scholastic debates. Justification by faith in Christ Jesus remains the article by which the church stands or falls, but now God is justifying non-European cultures and peoples. So also, the burgeoning two-thirds–world Lutheran churches are spreading God's mercy and justice in the old lands. If you teach evangelism in an ELCA seminary, you will be glad for a Mekane Yesus Christian in the class. The Ethiopian Lutherans are actually evangelizing, not just talking about it.

Today is an age of technological prosperity and spiritual anxiety. Before September 11, Thomas Friedman diagnosed

---

2. Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 222.

3. Loren Mead, *The Once and Future Church* (Washington D.C.: Alban, 1991).

4. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford, 2002).

5. Toby Lester, "Oh, Gods!" *Atlantic* (February 2002), 37–45.

6. Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (New York: Orbis, 1996).

this global complexity in his dialectical metaphor of *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*.[7] The Lutheran tradition grasped the printing press and learning of the Renaissance as gifts of God. We will not demonize science, technology, and communications. We welcome innovation, creativity, and courage to change in our post-agrarian, post-industrial, postmodern world. But we will not deify the market. Our confidence is in God's promise in Jesus Christ. We recognize *affluenza* for the spiritual malaise it is, an idolatry suffocating our souls.

Many in the culture agree with this spiritual diagnosis, even those for whom faith in Jesus Christ is only a vague cultural memory. Sandra Tsing Loh assesses our present condition in her review of *Living It Up*. Her perspective is provocative but simplistic, as if everything "progresses" in only one direction. "We work to consume," she says.

> We live to consume, we are what we consume. . . . "Materialism is not the opposite of spiritualism. Materialism is what you spiritualize when you have plenty of stuff.". . . And so . . . as materialism—the shallowest of all the isms—marches across the globe, Berlin walls crumble, imams fall, and indigenous cultures collapse.[8]

Evangelism Today: Lutheran Theology and Practice is a calling to the church: "Repent of self-concern. Turn toward God's mission in faith." This first lecture is "The Conversion of the Church." The scripture is a portion of the story traditionally called "The Conversion of Cornelius."

The story in Acts shakes the foundations of our evangelism, twice. First, the good news of Jesus is also about them, before we approved. Second, while they are being justified, the Holy Spirit converts the church.

The Hebrew, prophetic word for this "turning" is *shuv*, the return to God, the repentance of turning away from false gods and self-interests, the conversion of the soul and of a people. This "turning" is God's invitation to the beloved. Even God may be changed in the turning. "Return to the Lord, your God," calls the prophet Joel (2:13–14), "for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether God will not turn and relent and leave a blessing."

The key New Testament word is *metanoia*, which Greek philosophers understood as a "change of mind," such as when a Platonist was converted to become a Pythagorean. One teaching can't simply be heaped on another. *Metanoia* communicates movement and change, aligning thought and life with reality or truth. This turning, this conversion, this repentance is not what I do "by my own reason or strength." It is the justifying work of God.

As Luther taught, God not only converts people but calls, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth. God converts the church.

Listen now to two passages. The first is in Acts 5 where Israel is given repentance, forgiveness, and a restored calling: "God exalted him [Jesus] at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." The second is the last verse of our text in Acts 11: "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

This is the story of the conversion of Cornelius, Peter, and the church. In accepting Cornelius, God turns Peter's mind, confounding his soul. God converts the church from an enclave of election to an apostolic community.

---

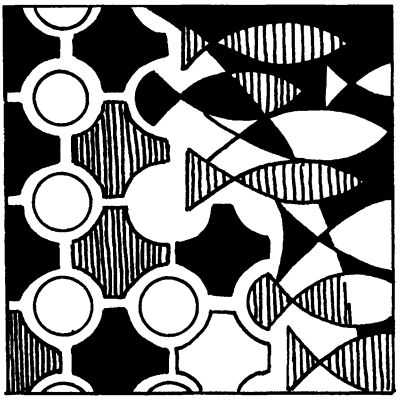
7. Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Anchor, 2000).

8. Sandra Tsing Loh, "Burgher Deluxe," *Atlantic* (December 2003), 126–28.

Listen now to Peter's defense of his apostolic evangelism in his report to the church at Jerusalem.

Acts 11 Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. [2] So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, [3] saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" [4] Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, [5] "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. [6] As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. [7] I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' [8] But I replied, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' [9] But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' [10] This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. [11] At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. [12] The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. [13] He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; [14] he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' [15] And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. [16] And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' [17] If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" [18] When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

The prefaces to Luke's two volumes announce the author's intent to write a "narrative" (*diegesis:* Lk 1:1–4), or "story" (*logos:* Acts 1:1–6). The first thing we will do is "indwell" the story, letting it have its way with us.



Luke-Acts displays the high literary art of Hellenistic historiography, then quickly moves into the narrative tradition of the biblical historians. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are protagonists. Some interpreters call the second volume "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." But the human agents are also real in the story. The antagonists provide intensity and conflict. In Israel's prophetic tradition, human history is an arena where God's reign is enacted and where God's will is defied. In postmodern literary terms, the Bible is a *metanarrative*. Enacting the script, Peter finally cannot prevent God's will.

This episode goes on for two chapters, then comes back in Acts 15. Only Luke's account of Jesus' execution occupies a larger space in the story.

We get just a glimpse of Cornelius's personal life and his household. We hear about his devotion, his generosity, his answered prayer. A modern telling would be highly personal with the convert singing "Amazing Grace!" The headline reads "Roman Centurion Acceptable to God!"

But in Acts, we hear no more of what happened to Cornelius. Instead, this story is about how God's mercy puts the church

in crisis. The gospel changes lives, and God transforms communities. Pentecost is repeated as the Holy Spirit is "poured out even on the Gentiles" (10:44).

Can we construct Lutheran theology and practice of evangelism on these scriptural foundations? Confident of God's grace for us, we will be challenged by God's justifying mercy for others. Before we are consulted, God is already accepting others as they are. What choice do we have?

Before we are consulted, God is already accepting others as they are.

First an angel of God appeared to the Centurion in Caesarea, who sends for Simon Peter lodging with Simon the tanner in Joppa. Until now, only Israel had heard the message. The people from the nations at Pentecost in Acts 2 were Jews or proselytes. In Acts 10, Peter is already on the edge of the kosher zone, staying with a tanner of dead hides. Now the boundary is crossed, prompted by an angelic messenger and a voice from heaven, what the rabbis call a *bat qol*. The vision horrifies the apostle. "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean" (10:14; 11:8).

A friend who was raised as a Muslim tells about the first time he ate pork. He had been a Christian for years. He tasted the meat in a dish of food. Later someone said it was pork. He fled the room and retched violently. Peter understood this response. All Jews knew that the Maccabean martyrs faced cruel executions by the Greeks rather than even appearing to taste pork.

In literary studies of biblical narratives, Peter is a "reliable witness." Having fulfilled the dire prediction of a threefold denial, he also has enacted Jesus' promise to "turn again" or "repent" to "strengthen your brothers" (Lk 22:32). When the people of Israel grasped their complicity in the crucifixion of the Jesus whom God had made Lord and Messiah, they were "cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37). In spite of Israel's defiance, even killing the Messiah, God intends gifts and promise, the gifts of the return to God and the presence of the Holy Spirit: "for the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him" (Acts 2:39). And what divine wrath could a Roman Centurion rightly expect? His compatriot was the officer of the heinous execution of Jesus, whom he himself declared "innocent" or "the righteous," enacting the prophetic script to his peril (Luke 23:47; Wisdom 2–3). Even Peter had not imagined how far God would extend the gift of repentance, the turn to God.

In Luke's story, Peter is a reliable witness, but God is the protagonist. The plot, God's plan and mission, was to turn the evil of those allied against Jesus into the restoration of Israel's calling to be a light to the nations.

Luke-Acts is a narrative and an Easter reading of Israel's scriptures, concerning "the things that have been fulfilled among us" (Luke 1:1). The risen Messiah "opened their minds to understand the scriptures." The story shows that "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:45–47).

The scriptures were the common

ground for Israel's faith and the battle ground among conflicting views of Israel's election. Some, like the priests in Jerusalem, died during the Roman destruction of the temple, in the midst of their sacrifices. Some despaired, wondering "Have the promises failed?"[9] But two forms of Israel's faith survived, disbursed in the empire. The Pharisaic school, which had been forged in the synagogues following the first destruction, became the Rabbinic Judaism of the second century. The followers of Messiah Jesus became the Christian movement, dominantly Gentile by mid-second century. Both traditions embodied the scriptures. Their hopes differed as much as their practices in the public realm.

To contrast the apostles' messianic interpretation, listen to the Avoth in the rabbinic Mishnah. Remember, the Mishnah is more than a century later than Acts, but it claims authoritative interpretation back to Moses:

> Moses received the Law from Sinai and handed it down to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly (or Great Synagogue). They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a fence round the Law (or the Torah).[10]

How will God's people be faithful when the world comes apart? The rabbis had an enclave strategy, conserving scattered communities over time.

"Be deliberate in judgment." We know this wisdom. Wild-eyed prophets are a danger. The community must be protected from enthusiasts.

"Raise up many disciples!" Israel's faith in diaspora is more a matter of teaching and learning than priesthood and temple. The great learning is Talmud, and Torah is Israel's catechism for her scattered children.

"Make a fence round the Law." God's enclave of holiness on earth must be protected from contamination. We get it. Remember the Galesburg Rule? *Reine Lehre*! Lutheran altars for Lutheran only!

As the story is told in Acts, the apostles of Jesus fanned out to the same network of synagogues earlier generations had established as houses of prayer and houses of study, spread throughout Asia Minor, Greece, North Africa, and Italy, from Babylonia to Spain. Time and again, the apostles first argued in the synagogues that the crucified Jesus is the Messiah, often meeting rejection. But some were "receptive," they "examined the scriptures every day to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11), and this news could not stay inside. The messianic interpretation of Israel's faith burst the enclave.

Luke lays claim to Israel's prophetic hope from the time of the first exile. When Second Isaiah was called to gather Israel to return to God, God gave a yet more profound commission: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel [restoration is good, but not enough!]; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isa 49:6).

In Luke 2, Simeon sees the child Jesus to be the "light for revelation to the nations" which is the "glory to your people Israel." In Acts 1 Jesus is about to be taken to God's right hand. The apostles seek a restored kingdom. Jesus promises the Holy Spirit's empowerment. "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

---

9. See Gwendolyn B. Sayler, *Have the Promises Failed? A Literary Analysis of 2 Baruch* (Chico: SBL, 1984. Dissertation Series 72).

10. *Mishnayoth*, IV, Order Nezikin, 3d edition by Philip Blackman (New York: Judaica Press, 1965), 489.

The biblical faith is hopeful but not naive. Neither is this a fatalistic history as in the rise and fall of the Roman Empire or the rise and fall of the Third Reich. "This child," says Simeon, "is set for the *falling* and the *rising* of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed" (Lk 2:34). God is the one who does the "setting" to lead obdurate Israel from falling to rising. Or as Ananias tries to beg off the risky assignment of finding Saul, the Lord tells him "Go, for he an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" (Acts 9:15–16).

Luke-Acts is the story of how God turned Israel from preserving itself into an instrument of God's saving light for the nations of the world. God's justification of the ungodly is a remarkable, risky social strategy. Luke's messianic commentary proves that this was God's mission all along. God gives repentance and justifies the nations, with and beyond Israel.

So does Luke's testimony provide a foundation on which Lutheran theology and practice of evangelism may be constructed, *now*? In a time when Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Reformed, Evangelical, and Episcopal Christians identify the twenty-first century as an era of apostolic mission, is Luke's prophetic history a compelling source for a Lutheran vision for God's mission and evangelism in the context of North America and the world?[11]

Before we put too fine a point on it, let us simply note that Bible reading is the single most important basis for evangelism. The form varies, but this is a community practice with prayer. Having once been focused on curing biblical literalism, I can tell you our problem now is biblical illiteracy. And if congregations are not places where Bible reading is nurtured, their evangelism will be thin soup indeed. Pardon my pique, but I have been invited to congregations excited about the Jesus Seminar and the Gospel of Thomas. And did the early church really suppress the Gnostics?

Before you indulge the dominant cultural suspicion of the Christian faith and evangelism, read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Reading the scriptures together will renew your faith and open your lives to the world.

Let's not be too righteous about our evangelism methods, either. As one person who was criticized said, "I'm sorry if my evangelism offends you, but I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it."

Luke's distinctive witness empowers and transforms a Lutheran theology of mission and evangelization. Let's explore this in three ways: (1) The apostolate is authorized witness to Christ crucified and raised; (2) Justification is God at work in history; (3) The conversion of the church is God's turning it into the world.

The apostolate is authorized witness to Christ crucified and raised. The Lutheran tradition was forged in the crucible of the sixteenth century, then quickly adapted to the learning of the Renaissance. Under siege from the East, Christendom, which had never been homogeneous, also fractured internally, politically, economically, and spiritually, responding in varied ways in differing contexts and cultures as a new world emerged. Varied visions of the one

---

11. See Richard H. Bliese, "Lutheran Missiology: Struggling to Move from Reactive Reform to Innovative Initiative," in *The Role of Mission in the Future of Lutheran Theology*, ed. Viggo Mortensen (Aarhus: Centre for Multireligious Studies, 2003), 11–30.

holy catholic and *apostolic* church persist to this day.

With notable exceptions, Lutherans have not yearned for the restoration of the Christendom of the Holy Roman Empire. Nor have we been enamored of the theocratic aspirations of Geneva, the City on a Hill, or the Kingdom of God in America. We have been dubious of moral rearmament, Christian perfectionism, church-growth schemes, and alienated mentalities. We often have been clearer about what we oppose than in telling the gospel truth.

But repentance means both confessing our arrogance and claiming our strength. This is a grand global tradition. J. S. Bach is our fifth evangelist, and our new hymns of Africa are filled with Spirit. Lutheran higher education is bold in its research, and our vast social service network is local and global, far beyond our size. We trust that the Triune God who raised Jesus from the dead loves the world and its people, complicated and conflicted as they are.

When Friedman describes the new world order with the metaphor of *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Lutherans nod in agreement. We are at home in both worlds. We are glad Friedman resisted the temptation of such people as Paul Kennedy, Francis Fukuyama, or Robert Kaplan "to capture in a single thought 'The One Big Thing.'" Rather, says Friedman, "the drama of the post–Cold War world is the interaction between this new system and all these old passions and aspirations. It is a complex drama, with the final act still not written."[12] We have hope in the final act!

Luke tells God's story, also a complex drama in a conflicted world, with the final act still not written. Our apostolic witness is to God's promise and whose world it ultimately will be. Our apostolate is authorized witness to Christ crucified and raised. Here we are radical. "Whatever does not teach Christ," declared Luther, "is not apostolic, even if Peter or Paul teaches it. On the other hand, whatever preaches Christ, that is apostolic, even if it is done by someone like Judas, Annas, Pilate or Herod."[13]

God converts the church from an enclave of election to an apostolic community.

Justification is God at work in history. A disturbing and joyful discovery of centuries of missionary work is that God is there ahead of us. In his study subtitled "The Missionary's Impact on Culture," Lamin Sanneh saw what he called "the Gentile breakthrough" of early Christianity as the justification of "cross-cultural tolerance in Christian mission."[14] Jesuits, Pentecostals, and Lutherans alike immediately translated the Bible into indigenous languages. Within one generation, peoples and tribes had their own written language, and God spoke it. While the colonial agenda of their own lands came with them, Christian missionaries soon became advocates of native cultures. Members of our faculties who have served in non-Western contexts regularly criticize our theological domestication. The prophets are still "the troublers of Israel."

12. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, xxi.

13. Preface to James, *Luther's Works* 35, ed. E. T. Bachmann (1960), 357ff.

14. Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message* (New York: Orbis, 1990), 47.

The "Gentile breakthrough" is God's. While the others were outsiders, God gave them "the repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18). Peter's faith in God leaves the apostle no choice, even with a Centurion. "Who was I that I could hinder God?" If the Triune God crossed the boundary of purity, cross-cultural mission is not mere tolerance. The church's election is its calling to apostolic mission in the twenty-first–century world of many cultures and religions.

Evangelism, in turn, is no mere benediction on human cultures. Against all regimes and schemes, the apostolic witness announces the finality of Christ, crucified at the hands of lawless people and raised by God. This is prophetic speech, placing the hearer in the presence of God. "There is salvation in no one else" (Acts 4:12). Repentance and faith in Jesus Christ are divine gifts with the benefits of forgiveness, life, and salvation. In every culture, incorporation into the body of Christ through baptism and sharing in Christ's death through the Lord's Supper change believers' lives.

One of our graduates from China is now a pastor in central South Dakota where only the pheasants are Chinese. Another from Ethiopia is serving in North Dakota. Both are astutely cross-cultural, even in their humor. Both are unapologetically evangelical in their witness. The olive trees of faith bear enduring fruit of hope that the Lexus will not overcome. The blessing of the missionary era has come home in the name of Jesus Christ. God's justification of the ungodly is the *missio dei*, God's mission let loose among the nations of the world.

The conversion of the church is God's turning it toward the world. The present rise of world Christianity emulates the first three centuries of the rise of Christianity. It is robust, nonconformist, and charismatic. Healings and prophecy abound.[15] What the Lutheran tradition brings to this burgeoning faith is centered in the biblical conviction that only Jesus Christ crucified is the saving power and wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1; Acts 4:12).

Picture the maps of Paul's missionary journeys. Think about "the church of God that is in Corinth" (1 Cor 1:2) with the synagogue near the Roman tribunal in the marketplace (Acts 18:1–17). Imagine Peter traveling from Joppa to Caesarea (Acts 10–11) or Paul entering the synagogues in Thessalonica or Beroea (Acts 17). By giving repentance, God unleashed a mission of hope, freeing faithful Israel in an empire controlled by fear.

Evangelism today is the work of the Spirit in thousands of Christian communities scattered throughout this land, like synagogues dispersed in the Roman Empire. Picture what the Episcopal Bishop Claude Payne calls the apostolates of the laity, the clergy, and the judicatories. In a merchandised world that is lonely and unforgiving, God's dominion calls the church to turn outside of its insular holiness, to be converted into apostolic communities. The risen Christ turns the church loose in an empire of commodified gods.[16]

Luke's messianic reading of Israel's scriptures announces the gospel of God's promise restored for our lives. The hopes and fears of all our years are still met in Jesus. Luke's story of Cornelius reveals again that while we were still at enmity with God, God is with us. God is for us.

---

15. See Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper, 1997).

16. Claude E. Payne, *Reclaiming the Great Commission* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

Justification by faith is God's pure promise to which we cling in life and death.

Luke-Acts is also a foundation narrative for the mission of the church. God's justification proves to be our calling, because, as Peter said in Acts 2:39, "the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." God is not done with us!

A few years ago I went on a "Lenten Journey," visiting seven congregations in the West that bishops had identified as "alive in mission." Following the example of our students, I was listening to what the Spirit is saying in the churches. Theologically interested in what my friend Timothy Lull described as the many mission contexts of the West,17 I came to hear what God is doing in very different churches. I attended worship, sat in on a Bible study, and met with lay leaders, the staff, and the church council, as the pastor was able to schedule them. My questions were always the same: "What mission has God given to you?" "What are your leadership needs?" "How can you help us prepare future leaders for the church's mission?" and "Who will lead Word and Sacrament ministries in a time of mission?"

One pastor was nervous. In his early years of ministry, he was known for his high liturgical practice. Now he was in a blue-collar town in the Pacific Northwest, the most secularized area in the nation. The church was an ethnic enclave, more Nordic than Norway, more Midwestern than Minnesota, and dying. He had taken his lay leaders to a seminar on the church for the unchurched. Together they turned the congregation inside out.

The first service was traditional with robes and candles, even a gospel procession. At 11:00, however, it was a praise band, a skit, and the pastor walking the aisle with a microphone. His sermon was down-to-earth gospel!

At the coffee hour, a 90-year-old man accosted me. "Well, what do you think about our church?"

(Time to listen, not talk!) "It's very interesting!"

He snorted, "I don't even know if it's Lutheran!" But then his eye twinkled.

"How would you know?" I asked.

"What do you mean?"

"How would you know if it is Lutheran?"

He snorted again. "Maybe I don't even care. Listen, we have had ten adult baptisms here since Christmas. That's good enough for me!"

"And are they coming to faith in Jesus Christ?" I asked.

"Of course! And reading the Bible too! And bringing their friends!"

"Then I think it is Lutheran in the best sense. Thanks be to God!"

You who bear the apostolic office of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, when the Spirit sends you to Cornelius, do not make a distinction between them and us, lest you withstand God. Evangelism today will convert the church.

---

17. See also "Preface: A Tribute to Tim Lull," in *The Role of Mission in the Future of Lutheran Theology*, ed. V. Mortensen, 5–10.

The God Who Made the World

David L. Tiede
Luther Seminary
dltiede@msn.com

Let us recall the assignment from the Hein Fry committee: to "identify especially promising scriptural foundations on which a Lutheran theology and practice of evangelism might be constructed." This is not evangelism itself but theological interpretation in service of evangelism.

When we "interpret the present time" by observing Lutheran social realities in North America, we see a community with a largely northern European history, now shifting from rural to urban, with a diminishing and aging membership. With the secular pundits we observe Christendom's decline. In rising world Christianity, we also hear dislocated cultures protesting globalization.[1]

Seeking scriptural foundations for "a Lutheran theology and practice of evangelism" is not denominational romanticism or desperation. This is a venture in faith in God who is stirring the church. Dwelling in the scriptures, we do not hope for Christendom restored, but we see God already hearing the prayers of the Centurions, the jailers, the sellers of purple, today. God's mercy restores the earth itself to the called.

Precisely because of the mission context, our seminaries are now challenging the criteria of excellence we received from Friederich Schleiermacher at the University of Berlin. The hegemony of the academic disciplines is being transformed into a ministry of preparing leaders for Christian communities. Just when our denomination is struggling to sustain direct support, these institutions are collaborating as never before in regional clusters and in building an ecumenical distributed learning system called *The Fisher's Net.* Who would have believed it, even fifteen years ago? With the blessing of our Division for Ministry and following the lead of many congregations and bishops, we have been moved beyond old comfort zones, together, risking our futures as teachers and institutions for a missional Lutheran church. The people of the church are engaged with us. As a business leader said, "If you are actually going after it, count me in!"

These Hein Fry lectures enter a rich deliberation among Lutherans concerning *Evangelism Today.* When Edgar Krentz and I accepted the invitation, we received a letter from Dr. James Scherer, emeritus missiologist from the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago and author of *Gospel, Church, and Mission.*[2] Along with others

1. See Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Anchor, 2000), 11, where he summarizes "the essence of globalization economics" according to Schumpeter and Grove: "Innovation replaces tradition. The present—or perhaps the future—replaces the past."

2. James Scherer, *Gospel, Church, and Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), 47: "In the new era of global mission, the movement will be from everywhere to everywhere; every country will be a 'home base,' and every

such as David Daubert of the ELCA Division for Outreach[3] and Edward Schroeder from Seminex, Scherer has helped us probe the evangelical strengths of the Lutheran tradition for ecumenical missiology.[4] In turn, drawing upon Luther and Bonhoeffer, Timothy Lull from PLTS called for a vision of mission for the local congregation involving "both deepening discipleship and at the same time engagement with the world in the structure and risks of daily life."[5]

Patrick Keifert's distinctive vocation as a public theologian was already evident in his book on *Welcoming the Stranger*.[6] With others on our faculty, he and Craig Van Gelder[7] teach our students to be theologically interested in the demographics of the communities they are called to lead.

Sociological, economic, and ethnographic data raise the question "What is God doing in this place?" Keifert is conducting ecumenical consultations through his company called Church Innovations. He seeks "a theologically framed, social scientific understanding of congregational mission." God's mercy is masked in apparently brute facts. Our theological frames are the bifocal lenses through which the Lutheran tradition discerns God's saving activity in justification and God's care for the world through the vocations of the baptized. In the "present time" God is calling and sending the church in apostolic mission. *Evangelism Today* is not about guarding Lutheran boundaries of doctrinal purity but about going public from the center: Christ, crucified and raised.

Martin Luther expressed this conviction boldly:

> If I profess with the loudest voce and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point at which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not *confessing* Christ, however boldly I may be *professing* him. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if one flinches at that point."[8]

Luke's story never indulges Israel or the church in denial or heroism. Israel's fall was as real as the messiah's execution and Jerusalem's destruction. "But we had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel," they said. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God restored Israel's vocation, not its dominion. Jesus "opened their minds to understand the scriptures and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Lk 24:21, 45–47)

The third evangelist invites us into a story of what God is doing, gives insight

---

country a 'mission field.' Each church will both send and receive. Every congregation will be a mission structure, and every Christian a witness for Christ."

3. See David Daubert, "Martin Luther's Mission Theology: A Glimpse through the Lens of His Introduction to the Gospels," an occasional paper written in 2002 to be distributed within congregations.

4. Edward Schroeder, "Some Thoughts on Mission Drawn from Luther and the Lutheran Confessions," in *The Role of Mission in the Future of Lutheran Theology*, ed. Viggo Mortensen (Aarhus: Centre for Multireligious Studies, 2003), 31–37.

5. Timothy Lull, "Preface: A Tribute to Tim Lull," in *The Role of Mission*, ed. V. Mortensen, 4–5.

6. Patrick R. Keifert, *Welcoming the Stranger: A Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

7. See "A Missional Understanding of the Church," in *The Essence of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 27–44.

8. *Luther's Works*, Weimar edition, 3:81ff., quoted in Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 108.

into this mission as the fulfillment of God's promises, and inspires our testimony to the public gospel truth. With the travelers to Emmaus, we read the scriptures and interpret the world in the light of Easter.

Paul's speech in Athens is a public confession, a scriptural foundation for every generation's faith and practice of evangelism. Paul in Athens also interprets the world as God's creation, destined by Jesus' resurrection to be restored as the arena of God's justice and mercy. Listen:

Acts 17 [16] While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. [17] So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. [18] Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities." (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) [19] So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? [20] It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means." [21] Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.

[22] Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. [23] For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. [24] The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. [26] From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, [27] so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. [28] For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said,

'For we too are his offspring.'

[29] Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. [30] While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, [31] because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

[32] When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, "We will hear you again about this." [33] At that point Paul left them. [34] But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Our first observation is that Paul makes a classic Jewish judgment about idols. Peter was aghast at being told to kill and eat unclean animals. Paul is "deeply distressed" or "provoked in his spirit" by the many idols. Luke does not explicitly cite from Leviticus for Peter. Neither does Paul directly quote the prophetic denunciations of idols. But Israel had been there before, and the prophets were not dispassionate about idols. Listen to the words of Isaiah:

They do not know, nor do they comprehend; for their eyes are shut, so that they cannot see, and their minds as well, so that they cannot understand. No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals, I roasted meat and have eaten. Now shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" He feeds on ashes; a deluded mind has led him astray, and he cannot save himself or say, "Is not this thing in my right hand a fraud?" (Isa 44:18–20)

"So," says Luke, Paul "argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons and also in the marketplace." What about? Paul and Silas also got themselves in a mess with the silversmiths in Ephesus when Paul said "that gods made with hands

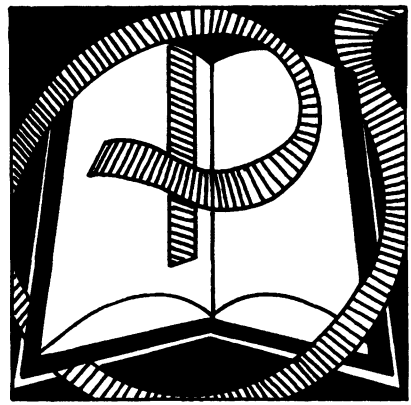
are not gods" (Acts 19:26). In both cases, Luke sees the idols in the context of the marketplace. Perhaps Luke judges the Hellenized Jews in Athens and Ephesus for getting along by going along. This prophetic stance fits Paul's words to the Romans condemning those who "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles" (Rom 1:23).

Prophetic religion is often iconoclastic. The radical reformers in Germany shattered the marble images of the saints. The Ayatollahs blasted Buddhist shrines in Iran. In Thomas Friedman's economic view, this is "how the age-old quests for material betterment and for individual and communal identity—which go all the way back to Genesis—play themselves out" as the Olive Tree contends with the Lexus, sometimes to the point of holy war.[9]

Luke is not naive about the economic impact of the Christian mission. He tells of Simon's attempt to buy divine power (8:9–24), describes the outrage at financial loss of the Philippians who owned the fortune-telling slave girl (16:19), and even calculates the value of the magic books that were burned in Corinth at "fifty thousand silver coins" (19:19). Luke's story, however, is not an economic exposé but a disclosure of the gospel truth.

Thus, our second observation is of Paul's regard for the theological concerns of Greek philosophies, but not without sharp edges on both sides. We have noted Paul's pique at the idols. You also can hear Luke's disdain of the Athenians and other foreigners who "spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new."

When the philosophers call Paul a "babbler," their insult is an elegant wordplay in Greek. The Stoics were focused on the "seminal reason of the universe," the



spermatikos logos. They regard Paul as a *spermologos*, a seed picker, searching for words. In turn, Paul was on the firing line with the philosophers, calling them unknowing in their worship, even ignorant (Acts 17:30). But these words run deep. In early Christian Platonic testimony, the negations express profound faith, the alpha privatives of God: "immortal, invisible, immutable, impassive, and unchangeable." Andre-Jean Festugiere said of the philosophers, "the supreme object of knowledge, the final degree of our metaphysical investigations, the term on which all the rest depends, is an object which defies definition, and hence cannot be named. It is the Unknown God."[10]

A. H. Armstrong described the context in which Hellenistic philosophy was formed following the massive dislocations of the Greek and Roman empires. Wrenched from hearth and home where life, death, and identity were once as secure as the soil, now common and educated people alike

9. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, 34.

10. Andre-Jean Festugiere, *Personal Religion among the Greeks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 44.

were expected to be cosmopolitan, ready or not. Try as they might, many were simply anxious, yearning for home, swept away by cruel fates.

> The sense of isolation, rootlessness and insecurity was . . . strong enough to set many people looking for a rule of life which would give them a sense of inward security and stability. This the new philosophies of the Hellenistic period proceeded to supply. They differ in their recipes, but they all claim to give to their followers the same good under different names, a self-sufficient, imperturbable tranquility proof against all the shocks and changes of Fortune, the shifting restless insecurity of human affairs.[11]

The "recipes" of the Epicureans and the Stoics differed from each other. Epicurus saw religiosity as a source of fear and pain. If there are gods, and Epicurus thought there were, they must be blessed, immutable. The goal of life is pleasure, that is, "the absence of pain in the body and trouble in the soul." "Death, therefore," said Epicurus, "the most awful of evils, is nothing to us, seeing that, when we are, death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not."[12] The Epicureans were the flower children of antiquity.

The Stoics were dutiful. Their physics were their existential ethics. The goal of life is to live in accord with nature, *kata physin zen*. Nature, *physis*, itself is pervaded by a living fire of reason, *logos*. Therefore, "when reason by way of a more perfect leadership has been bestowed on the beings we call rational, for them life according to reason rightly becomes the natural life." To live rightly in accord with nature is thus to live in accord with reason, *kata logon*, "an artistically working fire." Their deliberations were detailed about what was truly necessary and what was indifferent, or an *adiaphoron*. The wise are thus free as kings, practicing "irresponsible rule," but that meant life so disciplined by reason no governance was required.[13] All of which was very noble, but this life was deeply controlled.

Some of us are good Stoics. Do you use a Franklin planner or read Stephen Covey on *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*?[14] I do, knowing that the Mormons are the American Stoics. Perfection is as close as hard work. When teased for using a Franklin planner, Professor Diane Jacobson of our faculty replied, "Yes, I use it, but I don't inhale."

The Epicureans and the Stoics were Paul's interlocutors in Athens, and, to the delight of every academician since, Paul took them seriously. It is noteworthy, however, that the argument Paul advanced did not fit either of their recipes for the human condition as closely as that of the Platonists.

Listen again to Paul's rich description. God "made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God, and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:26–27).

This is not Stoic duty where, like a dog tied behind a cart, you are free to run from side to side but if you fight it the cart will drag you anyway.

Is salvation more than flight from the pain and passion of life? As Festugiere saw, the Hellenistic philosophies expressed

---

11. A. H. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* (London: Methuen, 1947), 115. See also E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965).

12. "The Epistle to Menoeceus," cited in Diogenes Laertius, Book X (Cambridge: Harvard, 1965), 131, 125.

13. See Diogenes Laertius, Book VII, 86, 156, 105, 122.

14. Stephen Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).

a yearning to escape, "to leave this earth, to fly to heaven, to be like unto the gods and partake of their bliss." In their middle-Platonic meditations on Plato's *Timaeus*, the goal of the ascent of the soul was a passionate search to be one with God. "Since the soul comes from Heaven it is of like nature with the stars, and since the stars present an eternally regular movement, wisdom must consist in putting the movement of many in accord with those of the stars."[15]

Yes, Luke's Paul is a faithful Jew, agitated by the idols. Yet somehow he got beyond the mutual insults to hear the spiritual longing in their quest. Peruse the spirituality section at Barnes and Noble. The yearning is palpable. If only for a moment, a flash of insight, if the heart could take wing, if the mind could ascend, a noetic hand reaching up to escape the bonds of earth, a finger of thought straining to touch the face of God, if we could grope to the stars and beyond, perhaps we would not be eternally alone, unforgiven.

Paul brings the gospel down to earth, full of faith, hope, and love. He affirms Jewish scriptural faith in the goodness of God's creation. Contrary to ancient Gnostics and New Age gurus, the earth is not a prison to be escaped. Christians who revel in the late, great planet Earth have missed God's love for creation and Jesus' resurrection as its restoration. In remarks on his book *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, N. T. Wright echoed Paul in Athens:

> People tend to think Christians are against the world. But what the Resurrection says is that God intends to remake the world. . . . The point of the Resurrection is that God has defeated evil and corruption and makes resurrection available to Christians and ultimately to the whole world."[16]

This presentation is in significant agreement with Wright's masterful New Testament interpretation. Without accepting all

Christians who revel in the late, great planet Earth have missed God's love for creation and Jesus' resurrection as its restoration.

of his historical verification, we must cheer his focus on the particularity of the history of Jesus, crucified under Pontius Pilate. "A truly first-century Jewish theological perspective would teach us to recognize that history, especially the history of first-century Judaism, is the sphere where we find, at work to judge and to save, the God who made the world."[17]

The world is not divine, requiring Stoic resignation before the powers. The human struggle is redeemed by God coming into the world God created. While human beings are groping upward to find God, God has dignified this "whole Earth ball," as one child called it, by Jesus' death and resurrection.

---

15. Festugiere, *Personal Religion among the Greeks*, 48.

16. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), reviewed by Cecile S. Holmes in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* (April 19, 2003), 7E.

17. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, xxxx), 662. See also Richard B. Hays, "Victory over Violence: The Significance of N. T. Wright's Jesus for New Testament Ethics," in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel*, ed. Carey C. Newman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 142–58.

This gospel is far from obvious in the first or the twenty-first century, especially in its hope from the apparent underside of history, refusing to be co-opted by any empire. The victors have long claimed God to be on their side, justifying the destruction of the vanquished. Why is Paul, in chains before the Roman Felix and Festus and the Jewish king Agrippa, still full of hope, eager to share his faith even facing death (see Acts 24–26)?

In Luke's context, *Evangelism Today* meant telling the story of hope on behalf of a defeated people in an imperial Rome corrupt in its power. The Jewish war fought by Vespasian and Titus, who then became emperors, was the eastern quagmire, like Viet Nam or Iraq for the American empire. Anguishing costs in resources and lives were compounded in political deceit.

Following the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem, the Jewish historian Josephus simply caved in to the Roman theodicy. God had gone to their side. He glorified Roman vengeance in the triumphal procession featuring Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian on mounted steeds in magnificent apparel. Led in a halter, the Jewish leader was scourged and executed at the Temple of Jupiter. "The triumphal ceremonies being concluded," says Josephus, "and the empire of the Romans established on the firmest foundation, Vespasian decided to erect a temple of Peace."[18] That's imperial confidence!

It is also easy to see why, ever since, Jews have despised Josephus.

Many others in the empire were also distressed. The Greek academic Plutarch, for example, was outraged by Roman arrogance and corruption. He saw "The Delay of Divine Vengeance" as the gift of time for repentance. But the last word from the gods for such hubris will be vengeance.

In Luke's narrative, however, the one who "will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31) is the Messiah whose vindication means the giving of repentance to Israel and the nations. The public *euangelion*, the news, is God's righteousness perfected in mercy. As Paul announces so hopefully to Agrippa, "by being the first to rise from the dead," Jesus will "proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:23).

Paul's rhetorical flourish at the end of his speech in Athens often is discounted as inept, suddenly coming down hard. Because the translation of verse 30 reads "God *commands* all people everywhere to repent," it is hard to hear repentance as gift. But Paul in Athens is echoing Jesus' promise to his disciples in Luke 24:47 and Peter's promise to Israel in Acts 5:31. "God has exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might *give* repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." The gospel promise in Athens is conveyed in the declaratory verb *apangelein*. God *announces* repentance for "all people" not to enforce submission but to inaugurate the restitution of justice, now. The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee. Identifying Jesus as the one by whom the world will be judged is a divine promise to the world of God's righteousness, fulfilled in mercy. The apostolic witnesses are ambassadors of mercy to sinful people and a world deserving condemnation. The resurrection signals God's purpose to be justified in restoring all.

In my first lecture I explored God's justification of the ungodly as a missional strategy with regard to peoples and cultures, converting the church to God's purposes. God's radical mercy of acceptance of a nonobservant Gentile is compounded by his being a Centurion. Cornelius is one of ten or more Centurions mentioned in

18. Josephus, *The Jewish War* 7.153–62.

Luke-Acts, and all the others except the one whose servant Jesus healed (Luke 7) were agents of the execution of Jesus or the imprisonment of the apostle.[19] God's gift of repentance is gospel indeed.

Acts 17 is also an evangelism text, communicating God's promises beyond boundaries, and the good news of the gospel has further benefits for the world. Paul's confidence in God's creation places this story at the foundation of the vocations of God's people. Jesus' resurrection reveals that the God who made the world still loves it. The restitution of justice begins now, awaiting the restoration of all promised by Israel's prophets (Acts 3:21).

God is creating a trustworthy world and calling people to the work. Jesus' resurrection is the scriptural foundation for the gospel of vocation. The benefit of the resurrection is not only that we go to heaven when we die. We also are called and sent as collaborators in God's creation of the world.

Justification and vocation are the twin pillars of the Reformation. They also are paired foundation blocks for Lutheran *Evangelism Today*.

James Nestingen spoke recently to our midwinter convocation on "Justification, Vocation, and Location in Luther's Reformation." He began with Luther's paradoxical proposal, echoing Paul: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant subject to all."[20] Then, following Bernd Moeller and Steven Ozment in part, he developed a lucid analysis of how Luther's "doctrines of justification and vocation shaped a witness that spoke to the urban migrants in the midst of their dislocation, providing a deep sense of identity in their new context." Nestingen's conclusion illumines our analysis of Acts 10 and 17:

> The doctrine of vocation properly follows as a necessary partner of justification. Restoring the creature to the creation as part of the larger act of retrieving the earth from the thrall of those powers that have demeaned and destroyed it, the risen Christ calls his own into the life-bestowing, creation-sustaining vocations of everyday life.[21]

Jesus' resurrection reveals that the God who made the world still loves it. The restitution of justice begins now. . . .

Evangelism Today means practicing Christ's extravagant hospitality of welcoming sinners—that's everyone—and sending saints—that's everyone, too—into their callings to be the hands of Christ in their lives in the world. The story of Paul in Athens illumines this good news in at least three ways.

1. The God who created the world has restored us to it. Pastor D. Michael Bennethum has published a fine little book in the "Lutheran Voices" series, titled *Listen! God is Calling!*[22] He joins a growing chorus of

19. Luke 7:2–10; 23:47; Acts 10–11; 21:32; 22:25–26; 23:17, 23; 24:23; 27:1, 6, 11, 31, 43.

20. "The Freedom of a Christian," in *Martin Luther*, ed. John Dillenberger (Garden City: Anchor, 1961), 53.

21. James Nestingen, *Centered Life Series* (St. Paul: Centered Life, 2003), 14.

22. D. Michael Bennethum, *Listen! God is Calling!* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003).

voices who declare Lutheran theology and practice of vocation to be central to the missions of our worshipping communities. Many of these voices are familiar in the ELCA. Bill Diehl, Sally Simmel, Marc Kolden, and Robert Benne have been public interpreters and critics. Their witness echoes Luther's affirmations of our place

How will we deal with others, family members and strangers, in the faith that God was at work in their lives before we showed up?

in God's creation, indeed our *places:* in home and family; in our work, paid and unpaid; in our public roles and responsibilities; and in our worshipping communities.

We don't have a temple with a high priest or a kingdom with a ruler. Neither did the apostolic church or the early Reformation movement. We do have faith in a down-to-earth God who created the world and raised Christ to restore us to our places in the world. We have holy awe for the mundane.

Lutherans have a vigorous mission in higher education, not merely to protect the young but to equip the saints for lives of witness and service. With an amazing infusion of support from the Lilly endowment, many of our colleges are striving to turn their attention to educate diligently for vocation. Our campus ministries in public universities are places to "learn together what it means to be the church not only in a wisdom (e.g. educational) setting but in society."[23] Some just hope to outlast the fad and return to the "serious academic work." Some will learn Parker Palmer's spirituality of teaching and learning.[24] Paul in Athens presses every discipline to strengthen God's care for the world.[25]

2. God is not far from each one of us. As Herman Stuempfle has noted, while Martin Luther was protesting the view that only the clergy have holy callings, "Our problem today is not so much the sacralization of vocation for a few, but its secularization for all. Vocation means simply one's job."[26]

The problem is still larger. More people are dislocated or displaced from their native lands and livelihoods than ever in history. Even many who have work find little satisfaction in it. The icons of consumption turn human beings into interchangeable parts. Our secular idolatries yield both anxiety among those who can never get enough and the desperate rage of terrorists tying bombs to their bodies. Who can save us from this body of death?

---

23. Donald Wisner, "Christian Formation and Vocation," *Lutheran Partners* 20 (March/April, 2004): 14.

24. Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

25. The contributions of several interpreters are notable: Mark R. Schwen, *Exiles from Eden* (New York: Oxford, 1993); Darrel Jodock, "The Lutheran Tradition and the Liberal Arts College: How Are They Related?" *Called to Serve* (Northfield: St. Olaf College, 1999), 13–36; Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); and Douglas J. Schuurman, *Vocation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

26. Herman Stuempfle, "Theological and Biblical Perspectives on the Laity" (Chicago: Division for Ministry, ELCA, 1989), 10.

Our awe for the mundane also means holy regard for all we meet. In a consumer society, we treat people as customers—not all bad if you're buying. But how will we deal with others, family members and strangers, in the faith that God was at work in their lives before we showed up? With what eyes will we see the man mowing the hotel lawn or the mother with her children in the market or the scientist in her laboratory?

Like Paul in Athens, we will respect sincere human efforts to reach toward God and to nurture our souls. Also with Paul, we will show regard for spiritualities of ascent as yearnings for the God who came to us in the flesh of Jesus Christ, not by our effort but as gift and promise. Thus we will also resist spiritual escapes and pieties that degrade the world or our mortal bodies.

Who will help us remember, "God is not far from each one of us"?

Evangelism Today means our congregations have work to do. Millions of baptized Christians are already in their places in God's world. Are their communities of worship preparing them to fulfill their callings?

At Luther Seminary, with the aid of Thrivent, we are engaged in an initiative called *Centered Life*. This effort is networked with the ELCA, several synods, our seminaries, colleges, and hundreds of congregations. It is built around ten pathways by which congregations either empower or block their capacity to equip the saints for callings in the world, *Connecting Sunday to Monday*. This abundance of missionaries relies on the promise "God is not far from each one of us."

3. God will have the world judged in righteousness. The bunnies and bonnets of the public version of the Easter season are depressing, primarily because of their vast denial of death. Mel Gibson's film about Jesus' crucifixion offended many. The news of his resurrection is not self-evidently good news, as if Jesus merely escaped death. Peter's hearers were first "cut to the heart," sensing their complicity in the violence. The good news comes in the declaration that by raising Jesus God was giving Israel and all the peoples of the world reprieve, a return to God, leading to a restoration of God's justice.

While we were yet sinners, bound as we were and still are in sin, Christ died for us. And in raising Christ Jesus from the dead God's mercy continued for us and for the world. We were set free to walk in newness of life, to get on with it. Your salvation is a promise to the world.

Every person's vocation matters to God, counts ultimately. The gospel does not end with your salvation, or even your neighbor's. Believing leads to belonging in a community of forgiven sinners, all of whom are called.

Still, many people lament, "My pastor has no idea what I do from Monday to Saturday. My congregation is set up to serve itself." Christ's resurrection sends his body into the world. Centered in Christ we are not yearning to escape the world or pursuing inward journeys of the soul. While those around us were practicing spiritualities of ascent, Christ came down, sending us to the places where we could touch their lives with his love.

Remember Ananias? Like many others in the Bible, he objected to the calling God gave him to go find Saul. "Lord, . . . I have heard how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem." "But the Lord said to Ananias. 'Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel. I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name'" (Acts 9:10–18).

Our homes and families are not idyllic havens but places where God calls us to live daily in forgiveness and love. Jesus did not promise that it would be easy. As a youth leader said, every household with a teenager is in crisis. But our Lord has promised to be with us, never far from us.

Our work, paid or unpaid, is often drudgery, but making the world a more trustworthy place participates in the joy of heaven in work well done. Our lives as citizens are called beyond the politics of self-interest to justice for the least. We have reason to be theologically interested in one another's callings. Our differing callings are dignified in serving the God who made the world. We hope to be chosen instruments serving God's desire to save all people.

Imagine millions of Christians leaving worship every week going into homes and families, public roles, and hundreds of thousands of work places, politics, schools, hospitals, industries, finance, construction, you name it. God's people are the hands of Christ in the world God loves. It is time we paid attention to what it takes to be Christian in high school and to weigh the law and gospel with attorneys and healing with health providers. We say "Go in peace, serve the Lord!" Do we then ask "How did it go?"

In the twenty-first–century world of many cultures and religions, God is calling and sending the church of Jesus Christ into apostolic mission. This is an era of rampant secularization, reducing the soul of faith to economic gain, in the ascent of the Lexus. This is also the century of the rise of world Christianity, with Olive Trees of faith bearing irreducible hope in the God who raised Jesus Christ. The final act of this complex is not written. In raising Christ Jesus from the dead, God has given the world back to us and us to the world. We have meaningful work, collaborating with God in creation. And God will have the world judged in Christ's righteousness.

For Lutheran Christians, dwelling in the commands and promises of God's word, *Evangelism Today* means disciplined commitment to two things:

1. Every Christian community where the word is preached and the sacraments are administered is called to be turned outside of itself, extending God's radical hospitality to everyone yearning for God. Only sinners need apply. God knows Cornelius by name and will send apostles to find him.

2. Every worshipping community is commissioned to send its forgiven sinners to serve the God who made the world. Equipping the baptized for their ministries in the world is a confession of faith in Christ's resurrection.

Book Reviews

Interpreting the Truth: Changing the Paradigm of Biblical Studies. By L. William Countryman. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003. ix and 245 pages. Paper. $20.00.

Countryman makes a passionate argument in this book for a more synthetic approach to the task of interpreting the Bible. The "paradigm" he sets out is not so much new as one not yet wholly implemented. A little less than half of the book sets out Countryman's view of interpretation as a conversation between text, interpreter, and community. The rest is a demonstration of his approach in readings of Jude, James, and Romans. Countryman is not arguing against historical or analytical study. But he wants to join analytical methods that take the text apart with synthetic methods that help to discover the richness and complexity of the texts. His main target is any reading of Scripture that only reaffirms our cultural assumptions. Rather, we should "read the text attentively enough to allow it to defeat our expectations," to surprise us, to facilitate new discovery of truth.

Although I readily agree that we need to read the Bible to challenge our comfortable assumptions, Countryman seems not to realize how much his views are determined by Western liberal values. In the actual practice of interpreting his model texts, Countryman uses primarily rhetorical approaches, setting a letter in its real-life context, identifying the issue and proposed resolution, and attending to the movement in the letter, particularly reading it from back to front. His readings of the three letters are worth the price of the book, as he successfully shows how a combination of analytical and synthetic methods can shed light both on the text and on our situation.

I recommend this book for preachers who are looking for accessible and practical guidance in their study of Scripture, a book that affirms the complexity of the text and the methods used to interpret it rather than pushing a single way of reading.

David W. Kuck
United Theological College
Kingston, Jamaica

A History of Biblical Interpretation. Volume 1: The Ancient Period. Edited by Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson. Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 2003. 536 pages. Cloth. $45.00.

This volume explores biblical interpreters and their rich variety of methods in the ancient period. Fifteen chapters by a renowned team of scholars examine inner-biblical exegesis in the Tanak, translation as interpretation in the Septuagint and the Targumim, and the exegetical approach of Philo of Alexandria, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Rabbinic Midrash, Jewish Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the New Testament, and subsequent Christian literature through the closing of the canon.

Although the essays are independent from one another, the editors have carefully assigned topics and arranged them in a way that attempts to avoid duplication. It is a reader-friendly work including chapter bibliographies and three comprehensive indices comprising 79 pages. The authors include a 54-page introduction and overview that provides a thorough summary of each chapter and links between the insights of these separate works.

One clear message that comes across in the entire work is that the biblical texts themselves present a multilayered richness and open-endedness that in turn encouraged the communities and individuals who sought to make the Scriptures vital and relevant to bring with them their own differences in worldview and approach to interpretation.

In a thought-provoking essay on inner-biblical exegesis that lays the groundwork for the remaining articles in the book, Esther Menn notes that biblical interpretation begins long before the completion of the written Tanak.

Rather "one must look even earlier, to the centuries that witnessed the composition of the biblical books themselves." She describes how a preoccupation with written texts is projected back into Israelite history in references to depositing the Mosaic Law and in calling attention to professional scribes to chronicle the history of the kings. Yet those responsible for the transmission of texts treated them with a lively and creative freedom to adapt these traditions for their own time. This can be seen by analysis of legal material, such as laws concerning the sabbatical year, which vary in different strata of Israelite history. It also is evident from the adaptation of the prophetic oracles of Jeremiah, for example, that are reinterpreted by later prophets. Scribal glosses, explanatory interpolations, and rewriting of scripture demonstrates that Tanak was seen as a living document. This openness provided a model for later interpreters.

While the theme of biblical interpretation has been treated extensively for decades of biblical scholarship, this volume is not simply a rehash of well-worn views. A number of traditional ideas are challenged. Leonard Greenspoon questions the traditional view that the Septuagint played a considerable role in the formation of the New Testament. With new insights into Hebrew textual history from the Dead Sea Scrolls, it may well be that New Testament writers had access to a Palestinian Hebrew text closely related to the Septuagint's source. Frances Young cautions against an oversimplification of characterizing Christian methodology in Antioch and Alexandria as literalist vs. allegorical. Rather, both schools valued the literal wording of the text and sought a deeper meaning. The differences must be finessed by an understanding of the ancient schools of grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy, with the Alexandrians emphasizing the philosophical aspects of their education and the Antiochenes emphasizing the grammatical and rhetorical aspects.

In short, this volume provides a wealth of the latest research on interpretation among Jews and Christians in the ancient world. Bringing it all together in one volume is commendable.

In a multi-author work like this, there are bound to be conflicting views. Traditionally it has been held concerning the canon of Hebrew writings that the Prophets had achieved a fixed form by 200 B.C.E., several centuries after Torah. While James Sanders pushes the date for the Prophets back to 400 B.C.E. so that Torah and Prophets were seen in tandem, James Charlesworth believes that the Prophets were not defined canonically until the second century C.E. With regard to the third section, "The Writings," both Sanders and Charlesworth part from the traditional date at Jamnia in 90 C.E. Rather, this third section was not seen as canonical until the mid-second century C.E., after apocalyptical thinking waned following the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt. With regard to the canon of Christian Scriptures, Harry Gamble argues for a rather late date: "only in the fourth century did efforts begin in earnest to determine a canon" (p. 410)—at the very end of the ancient period.

Some might question whether the organization of the book is completely consistent with the message of the fifteen authors that Scripture remained an open, lively collection throughout the ancient period. The title of Sanders' article points not to the closing of canon but to "The Stabilization of the Tanak." Yet a chapter on Hebrew apocryphal and pseudepigraphic works is placed only after that chapter on canon, separate from Philo and the Qumran writers. Likewise the chapter on New Testament apocrypha occurs at the very end of the book after chapters on Jerome and Augustine. On this point, the structure of the book seems to be more in tune with post-Reformation Protestant thinking than that of the ancient world. Likewise one might expect to find Donald Juel's article, "Interpreting Israel's Scriptures in the New Testament," occurring earlier than chapter 10, perhaps prior to the discussion of Targum and Rabbinic Midrash so that the reader is encouraged to see the methodology of New Testament writers not separate from but in the context of the variety of Jewish interpretation from Philo of Alexandria to Rabbinic Midrash to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The current work is volume 1. Subsequent volumes will discuss interpretation in the medieval and Reformation periods; the rise of modern biblical criticism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and the twentieth century.

Fred Strickert
Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa

Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of Fusing Christian Values with Business Life. By Laura Nash and Scotty McLennan. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2002. 352 pages. Cloth. $23.95.

Nash, a researcher at Harvard School of Business, and McLennan, Dean for religious life at Harvard, mince no words: There is a vast chasm today between church and business that hurts both sides. To support this claim as more than an anecdotal truth, the authors did in-depth interviews of both business people and clergy. These interviews support the distance between some of the fundamental beliefs and attitudes of these two groups. Business people who are active church leaders cannot identify ways that their faith is a resource for their work lives, and pastors, who profess admiration of congregants who are business leaders, describe corporate America as a hotbed of greed and corruption.

The authors identify three primary tripping points in church culture that are sources of the business-church estrangement: a history of non-engagement in business from a theological perspective, a vague but deep ideological hostility toward capitalism and modern corporations, and a history of associating spirituality only with settings outside of business and the corporate world. The authors put this schism at the door of the church.

> In many cases, the ecclesiastics whom we have interviewed have no awareness of the depth of their distancing from practical economic dilemmas, or of the reasons for the church's inability to be a significant influence on the business culture. Strong in their own distaste for the false gods of the marketplace, they fail to see their own role in cutting the church off from the significant parts of the lay Christian's everyday life. (p. 102)

The authors do not offer answers to this problem. Rather, they see their work as a wake-up call to the church. However, they do argue for engaging in church-business dialogue and forming linkages between these two groups through the many lay persons who love both. To assist the reader with this process they provide a reflection action section at the end of each chapter as well a separate discussion guide.

The research for this book was among Caucasian business people and Protestant churches, so their findings do not reflect the experience of Black, Jewish, or Muslim business people or worship groups. Although this book takes both religion and business seriously, the primary challenge is to church leadership to initiate the change.

Peter Kunnalat
Catholic Theological Union, Chicago

The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50–70 C.E. By Aaron Milavec. New York and Mahwah, N.J.: The Newman Press, 2003. xxxviii and 985 pages. Cloth. $64.95.

The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary. By Aaron Milavec. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004. xxi and 111 pages. Paper. $9.95.

Two editions of the same early Christian text by the same scholar published almost simultaneously are unique. The first is massive, a major work of reference on the Didache, exhaustive in coverage, in effect a history of doctrine of the topics covered. The second is a manual edition for persons encountering the text with little background in early Christian history. The second is written out of the fuller knowledge of the first.

Milavec is convinced that the Didache is a unity, written with a plan in the author's mind from the beginning. He holds that it is independent from the Gospels, not indebted to Matthew as is often held. He also holds that it originated as an oral composition, written down many years later. This implies that the Didache is the oldest Christian document in existence.

I find this claim hard to accept. It would put the origins of the episcopate extremely early and would demand a complete revision of the course of early Christian history.

Nonetheless, there are many keen insights here. I would urge students to purchase the small edition and scholars to consult the larger one—though reading it with a hermeneutic of suspicion always.

Edgar Krentz

Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches. Ed. Anthony J. Blasi, Jean Duhaime, and Paul-André Turcotte. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2002. xii and 802 pages. Cloth. $100.00.

This impressive tome intends to provide for biblical scholars important insights and results from the social scientific study of the Bible and early church. Twenty-six scholars contribute pertinent material from their fields of expertise. Following a general introduction the book is divided into five sections: methodology, the context of the Jesus movement, the role of power, economics, and psychosocial approaches. It is a very useful work in many respects. The bibliography may nearly be worth the rather uncommon cost of the book. There is an extensive list of references (pp. 643–703) and thorough compilations of sociohistorical studies dealing with major themes or sections of the New Testament (pp. 707–51). These can serve to guide further research. The majority of the essays also make frequent reference to pertinent materials.

I can note only a few of the articles here. David G. Horrell, in "Social Sciences Studying Formative Christian Phenomena: A Creative Movement," provides a necessary and quite extensive introduction to social scientific criticism of the New Testament. Jack T. Sanders has two helpful articles. In "Conversion in Early Christianity" he surveys recent theories regarding the conversion of Gentiles to Christianity and examines available early Christian data. From a sociological standpoint Sanders sees conversion resulting primarily from mutual involvement or encapsulation, but as a historian he emphasizes the rational power of the gospel. In her article, "Archaeological and Architectural Issues and the Question of Demographic and Urban Forms," Carolyn Osiek describes the structure of various houses in the early centuries of the Christian era. She analyzes their sociological function and then uses that to clarify early Christian texts referring to house churches. Peter Richardson and Douglas Edwards use archaeological data to show the role of banditry in Palestine at the time of Jesus ("Jesus and Palestinian Protest: Archaeological and Literary Perspectives"). They employ their findings to illustrate how Jesus would have been sympathetic to the plight of the exploited peasants and might even have been considered a bandit but was not really involved in social violence. In her article, "The Limits of Ethnic Categories," Nicola Denzy maintains that Christianity could develop as one entity because Jews and Gentiles shifted their identities from essence or primordial (e.g., Sabbath laws) to boundary or circumstantial (e.g., opposition to idolatry). In somewhat the same vein Harold Remus, in his article on persecution, shows how boundary formation by the first Christians invited Roman opposition.

This handbook is a very useful reference work and should be available to all scholars of the New Testament and early Christianity. Social scientific analysis of the New Testament has become a very extensive enterprise. While the book offers thematic sections, it does not cover the waterfront by any means. For example, there is no article on healing or on the family. However, the extensive bibliography points to additional resources in the missing areas.

Graydon F. Snyder
Chicago, Illinois

Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence. By Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee. Harvard Business School, 2002. 352 pages. Cloth. $27.99.

Why do equally intelligent, gifted leaders have different success rates in leadership? Why do groups following the same steps in a program have such disparate results? The authors posit that the difference often rests in the leader's emotional intelligence (EI). *Primal Leadership* translates Goleman's extensive research in the area of emotional intelligence into a leadership theory stating that the fundamental task of leadership is "to prime good feelings in those they lead. That occurs when the leader creates resonance—a reservoir of positive feeling that frees the best in people" (p. ix). That is, the leader's emotions are contagious. If a leader exudes energy and enthusiasm, an organization flourishes; if a leader spreads negativity or dissonance, it flounders. Don't confuse this with

"touchy-feely" niceness. This is the challenge of maturity in leadership.

The book is divided into three sections. The first gives the characteristics and examples of resonant and dissonant leadership. The six leadership styles the authors examine are visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting, and commanding. They also recommend the situations in which each style of leadership is most effective and its drawbacks. The second section outlines the four dimensions of emotional intelligence needed to become a more positive leader: self-awareness, managing ourselves, relationship management, and social awareness. The third section addresses how to use these newfound skills to build a more effective, emotionally intelligent organization.

Gifts of this work are the 36 pages of notes supporting the author's suppositions, examples from a wide array of fields, and attention to how one can learn and grow in emotional intelligence without being a self-help book. Also, I like that, rather than driving home one leadership style, the authors promote six styles that can be nuanced as the situation demands. My greatest learning was the discussion of how a pacesetting style of leadership can easily slip into being debilitating rather than energizing. An issue I would like to have seen included is the use of humor in leadership.

Colin Crossey
Devon, Ireland

Can a Church Live Again? The Revitalization of a 21st-Century Church. By Ronny Russell. Macomb, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2003. x and 134 pages. Paper. $14.00.

Russell, Senior Pastor of Mission Baptist Church in Locust, North Carolina, tells the story of moving his rural congregation from a program-based church to a mission-focused, disciplining church. While recovering from a heart attack at age 46 Russell reassessed his call to ministry at Mission Baptist. He realized that his current ministry and leadership style—"pastor as handyman"—was a major factor in his stress and the lack of growth of his congregation. He moved from ministry governed by the three B's—budgets, bodies, and buildings—to ministry governed by "Does it make disciples? If it doesn't, it needs to be dropped or changed" (p. 27).

A recurrent theme is that transition ministry can be done only by a pastor who is clear that his or her call to that particular site is a divine appointment for the long haul. The cost to the pastor will be mental, emotional, and even spiritual fatigue. One can't go it alone. Pastors need to be surrounded by coaches—other mission pastors, good authors, and lay leaders who support the ministry as well as those who are opposite minded. Chapter 6 is devoted to Russell's intriguing and unique claim that each pastor and transitional ministry site needs a prophet. The prophet cannot be the pastor because of the complexity of the multitude of relationships.

What do missional congregations look like? It is clear that they have absolutely no function other than to make disciples. They do not have members, only ministers who are actively engaged in outreach. They are "maturity-oriented" (p. 57), that is, they look to the identified needs of the community, especially the marginalized, rather than primarily the needs of members. One makes this transition by bubbling-up leaders who can think outside the box and then supporting their inherent passions for ministry. Russell reminds us that at times we may also need grenade tossers who will upset the status quo.

Of course, these actions will lead to conflict. Old issues will resurface. Some members will leave. Some naysayers will stay and wear the battle as a sign of honor. Pastors must count the cost and be sure they can bear them for the long haul. They also must be clear about their priorities: "Choose carefully the hills you are willing to die on or you will die a thousand deaths" (p. 50). Also, to choose to not work for discipleship will create a long, painful death.

The title *Can a Church Live Again?* is derived from the Job verse "If a man dies, can he live again?" Russell reminds us that ultimately that decision belongs to God. However, we, like Job, need to faithfully respond, "All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come."

Unlike most authors of books on congregational transformation, Russell serves an established denominational congregation rather than

a new mission start and can address the gifts and struggles inherent in such a setting. This is major benefit of the book. Its story format makes it an easy read. He quotes a great deal from Easum, Bandy, and Bill Hull.

This work would be strengthened by a bibliography of books referenced. And at times, the heavy male language and Russell's form of piety are off-putting.

Sr. Sheila Murphy, O.P.
Chicago Archdiocese

Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther's Reform. By Oliver K. Olson. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002. 428 pages. Cloth. $100.00.

Oliver Olson's passion for the controversial Reformation theologian Matthias Flacius is evident from one's first encounter with this book. The title itself betrays Olson's desire to find a place for Flacius alongside the most prominent sixteenth-century Lutherans.

The book chronicles the life and work of Flacius from his earliest days up to his time as a professor in Jena. The reader gets a heavy dose of Olson's devotion to Flacius and revulsion of Melanchthon, leading this reviewer to wonder whether Olson tends toward presenting a hagiography rather than a biography.

Despite his somewhat overzealous and one-sided portrayal of the conflicts in which Flacius was a major player, Olson does a wonderful service to students of the early modern period of German history and theology. He provides many short translations of the work of Flacius otherwise unavailable in English. In addition, the comprehensive history of the development of the theology of Flacius to the time of his professorship in Jena is invaluable. And if that is not enough, the layout of the book is beautiful, containing many pieces of sixteenth-century art along with photos of early modern manuscripts. Finally, Olson offers a wonderfully comprehensive bibliography of the works of Flacius. The only drawback for a nonacademic audience would be its price tag.

Nathan Montover
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Reflections on Forgiveness and Spiritual Growth. Ed. Andrew J. Weaver and Monica Furlong. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000. 176 pages. Paper. $13.00.

This collection of short essays written by authors from the United Kingdom and the United States looks at forgiveness from both spiritual and psychological perspectives. In this work, forgiveness is understood to be a process, not a one-time act of the will. That is, one must grow tired of being angry, give up the idea of revenge, and finally be able to "pray for the well being of the enemy" (p. 21). Theologically it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit to call a group into community that one would work at forgiveness. Also, God is understood through incarnational theology—that is, God is present in this process through healing touch and embraces, reconciling words, and shared meals, especially Eucharist. These are concrete marks of the beginning of the end of conflict.

This is no lightweight book. The authors have personally worked and lived through issues such as ethnic cleansing in the Balkans and Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, and the Clinton impeachment hearings. Justice and the issues of systemic evil and forgiveness are core values for all of them. How does one deal with atrocities and the betrayal of the public trust? Are some things unforgivable by humans? How does one lead people through the challenge of corporate forgiveness when all members of a faction are not of one mind?

As with many collections, the quality of the writing is uneven, and there is some repetition. Yet this is a timely set of writings to help wrestle with a framework to talk about a God-centered, forgiving response to current issues including September 11 and the war in Iraq.

Viktoria Halmagyi
Vandalia, Illinois

Books reviewed in *Currents* can be ordered through the **LSTC Book Center**
1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615
(773) 256-0753

Preaching Helps

Ash Wednesday—Seventh Sunday of Easter, Series B

Following a Different Guide through Lent and Easter

Once again we journey from ashes to alleluias, from ". . . you are dust" to "Christ is risen indeed!" In many places and among many peoples, we make this pilgrimage in the context of personal, congregational, national, and global crises. How does the journey of Lent and Easter speak to these crises? Pieces of Mark's account of Christ's crucifixion seem to spring from the page. For example, "At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" (15:34). The journey from feeling forsaken by God to being confronted with new life in Christ might be a way to frame Lent and Easter this year. But am I bringing my own agenda to the season? Am I simply seeing what I want or need to see? And will the result be preaching that is tame, expected, and predictable?

Joseph R. Jeter Jr. invites preachers to reflect on crises as a pilgrimage, which calls the congregation out of its everyday life in quest for God (*Crisis Preaching: Personal and Public* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1998], 38–39). According to Jeter, faced with crisis we must learn both the patterns of pilgrimage and the customs and rules of the road. We must discover and differentiate between what is stable and what is subject to change, what is essential and what is necessary to leave behind. Pilgrims negotiate roadblocks, see a familiar landscape change, and even change it themselves. They uncover and discover what they initially overlooked. Pilgrims watch for signs of danger and listen to guides who both warn and recommend. Most important, pilgrims reflect upon the goal of their journey, where they are headed, and why they are setting out.

As we seek to be pilgrims, a problem that many preachers face is that we know the trip through Lent to the paschal mystery to the seven-week celebration of Christ's resurrection just a little too well. Yes, scripture and lectionary provide us with different guides—Luke and John, Matthew and Mark. Yet, over the years, even these guides become familiar friends. We know their agendas, their perspectives, the things they would have us see and remember.

Dennis R. Bolton, who offers this series of Preaching Helps, contends that we would benefit from making the Lenten-Easter journey under the direction of a different guide. Pastor Bolton invites us to follow the psalmist through Lent and Easter. He uses the appointed psalm as the primary text for each Sunday. He assumes that most pastors do not usually preach on the psalms and that we and our hearers would be blessed by doing so. He bases his reflections on the images of a "cupped ear" and an "open mouth"—the first an image for listening to the psalm text in conversation with biblical scholarship for discoveries that might enhance our "hearing" these psalms, and the second an image for how we can speak about the psalm, what we can preach about it. Bolton reports that he discovered "a vast new knowledge and joy in this process of psalm preaching—a deeper connection between the Old and New Testaments, between Israel and the new Israel (church), and the deep connection of Jesus and Judaism."

Bolton is pastor of St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Lexington, South Carolina. A graduate of the University of South Carolina and Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, he earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, and completed additional graduate study at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill and Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. He is a member of the Association of Clinical Pastoral Educators. Dr. Bolton served parishes throughout North Carolina and South Carolina and was Interim Director of Continuing Education at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. He has written for publications including *Currents*, *Preaching*, *Biblical Preaching Journal*, *Lectionary Homiletics*, *The Word in Season*, and *Light for Today*. He is married to Angela, and they have two daughters: Jessica and Brittany. He is a Tae Kwon Do black belt and an avid reader, and he loves the beach.

I confess that I feel a certain uneasiness about abandoning familiar guides to follow a stranger through Lent and Easter. It is frightening, risky, even dangerous. The way Mark tells it, that's how the journey was for our Christ. While I may not abandon Mark for the psalmist, if spending time in the psalmist's company leavens my Lenten preaching with a bit more uncertainty and my Easter preaching with a bit more joy, a "cupped ear" as I listen to the psalmist and an "open mouth" as I join the psalmist in speaking to God can only enrich my preaching and my—and my hearers'—pilgrimage through Lent and Easter.

Have a blessed trip!

Craig A. Satterlee, Editor
csatterl@lstc.edu

Ash Wednesday
March 1, 2006

Joel 2:1–2, 12–17
Psalm 51:1–17
2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10
Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
Psalm 51 is heard against the somber sounds of the Ash Wednesday service and the scraping of ashes on foreheads. With a cupped ear, we listen for psalm sounds:

Psalm 51 begins with a focus on the character of God. Three key Hebrew words ring out the word *grace: mercy* or *gracious, steadfast love*, and *compassion*. God's steadfast love is a tolling bell that rings throughout the biblical land. It was heard in the ear of the prophet Hosea through his faithful marriage to his unfaithful wife Gomer (Hosea 1–3). It was heard in the voice of a loving parent (God) spoken to his rebellious child Israel (Hosea 11). God's steadfast love sounded through the mountain cloud and filled the ears of Moses at Sinai as steadfast love was being written on stone tablets. The "grace notes" of God always precede any sounds of sin.

The sound of sin echoes through three words. "Transgressions" (v. 1) suggests the sounds of a rebellious child (Isa 1:2). "Iniquity" groans with the pressure of being twisted (Isa 24:1) or bent down (Ps 38:6). "Sin" (vv. 2, 3, 4, 9) fills the ear with the windy noise of arrows missing their targets. Sin is the sound of missing the mark.

Balancing the sin-filled noise of rebellion, groaning, and missing are sounds of forgiveness. The sound of washing with divine detergent is the desire of the sinner who wishes to be washed (v. 2). The psalmist wants to be cleansed like Naaman before his river bath. Finally, as one who has tears blotted away (Isa 25:8), so is the blotting of sins.

In the words of the weekly liturgy, we hear the psalmist ask for God to create "a new heart" and to put in us a "steadfast spirit" (v. 10). The verb *create* occurs in Scripture with God as the subject, and it means to bring into existence what was not there before. Only God can create a new heart and fill our ears with the sounds of praise.

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech
The season of Lent begins with a liturgy that shocks us into awareness of our sin and mortality. Ashes are marked on our foreheads, and we know the psalmist's cry "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (v. 3). Perhaps we can speak the words "blot out," "wash," and "cleanse" as we approach the bowl of ashes. Could the preacher use this season of Lent to emphasize God's action to *create* something new in us? Creation is God's doing, not ours! Can we pray with the psalmist, in this penitential season, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a right spirit within me?" For the joy of forgiveness is not an end but a Lenten beginning. DRB

First Sunday in Lent
March 5, 2006

Genesis 9:8–17
Psalm 25:1–10
1 Peter 3:18–22
Mark 1:9–15

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
Listen to the psalmist's arms as they move upward in the air as the psalmist offers this prayer: "To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul."

Psalm 25 is a prayer for help. Verse 1

is a description of prayer using the metaphor of the soul. In ancient Israel, the lifting up of one's hands in an outstretched gesture suggested placing one's life in God's grace. It was a way of saying that one's life depended entirely on God and God's blessings.

Verses 4–5 suggest that the subject of prayer is learning. Prayer is not self-taught; it does not come from reason or experience or the gathering of information. Rather, prayer comes from God who teaches us (v. 4) and leads us (v. 5) in God's saving knowledge.

God is trustworthy because God is full of "steadfast love and mercy" (vv. 6–7). Therefore, the psalmist can cry to God for help and forgiveness when he fails to follow God's torah.

God will instruct the sinful (v. 8) in the way of life.

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech

Every preacher knows people who read books on prayer or attended workshops on prayer. They talk the talk but don't walk the walk. The one thing they don't do is pray. They try to reason prayer or acquire knowledge of prayer or experience some new prayer gimmick only to discover that prayer is God's gift. I have met a few so-called "prayer warriors" who did not attend worship because of some issue over pastors, finances, or other church members.

Prayer comes from God who is our teacher and leader. Prayer begins in worship at font and table. Perhaps a sermon on the source of prayer based on this psalm could become an important Lenten discipline. DRB

Second Sunday in Lent
March 12, 2006

Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16
Psalm 22:23–31
Romans 4:13–25
Mark 8:31–38

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds

Listen to the psalmist's discovery that God is not absent from suffering but present in it. This leads the psalmist to proclaim, "You who fear the Lord, praise Him" (v. 23).

It is clear that by verse 25 the psalmist has had a change of heart. Earlier, in verses 2–3, he was feeling forsaken and abandoned by God. The psalmist had cried out for help only to receive no answer. The psalmist believed that God had hidden God's face from him. But now, the psalmist knows that God has heard his cry. God does not hide God's face from him (v. 24), nor does God despise the afflicted. Rather, God is faithful and will deliver his people. The poor shall eat (v. 26) and praise God. There will be a festival meal in worship where all will sit and feast together. From one who stood so close to death comes the festival shout, "May your hearts live forever!" (v. 26).

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech

The psalmist has made a great discovery in this section of Psalm 22. His mood has changed from despair to hope. The psalmist realized that he was not alone in his suffering. God was with him the entire time.

How many people believe that they suffer alone? This is a powerful question for the preacher to unpack in a sermon. How do Christians suffer differently from nonbelievers? How do Christians help others who suffer? What is it, or Who is it that we know in our suffering? How is it that a dying church member celebrates the Eucharist with

joy and confidence and treasures her time in worship? Preach on these things, preacher. DRB

Third Sunday in Lent March 19, 2006

Exodus 20:1–17
Psalm 19
2 Corinthians 1:18–25
John 2:13–22

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
Listen to the psalmist calling us to "hear" the creation speak/witness to the Creator. For in creation's "confession" our ears tingle with the words, "O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer" (v. 14).

Verses 1–6 speak of the world's testimony to her Creator. The sun, heaven, day, and night all witness to God. Creation manifests the glory of her Creator. Verses 7–9 discuss God's torah with the use of six synonyms: law, decree, commandment, ordinances, fear of the Lord, and precepts. God's torah bestows the blessings of wisdom, joy, endurance, enlightenment, restoration, and righteousness. Finally, the psalmist knows that he still needs God's forgiveness and help and clings to the Lord, his Rock.

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech
Once again the preacher hears the theme of the love of God's word in the psalms. God's instructions and teachings are understood not as punishment but rather as a joyful experience. To swim in the sea of Scripture is to be washed in wisdom, joy, endurance, enlightenment, restoration, and righteousness. The preacher could preach an entire Lenten series on these gifts alone. Creation itself confesses the glory of God's law. What a wonderful opportunity for the preacher to expand and to deepen the richness of our world's beauty and sacredness. There is also the possibility of a sermon built on the image of God as Rock and Redeemer. Last year in our parish we used a Lenten series that involved the use of rocks as reminders of God's power, love, and forgiveness at work in our lives. DRB

Fourth Sunday in Lent March 26, 2006

Numbers 21:4–9
Psalm 107:1–3, 17–22
Ephesians 2:1–10
John 3:14–21

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
Hear this psalm as a sermon on the "steadfast love" of God. There is thankfulness and praise in the voce of the psalmist.

Verses 1–3 are a community thanksgiving that encourages all the people to praise God for their return from exile. The ones who are called to give thanks are "the redeemed of the Lord" (v. 2). This phrase is used only one other time, in Isaiah 62:12, when it refers to the inhabitants of restored Zion.

There are four sections in this psalm that illustrate God's deliverance from trouble. Verses 4–9 describe those who are lost in the wilderness and are hungry and thirsty. The second section in verses 10–16 describes those in prison. This could be any type of prison—physical, emotional, or spiritual.

The third section is the reading for Lent 4. The NRSV translates the beginning of verse 17 as "Some were sick" instead of "Some were fools." Most scholars seem to prefer the meaning of "fools" as those who

disobey God, which can lead to sickness. But the message is clear either way: It is God who heals!

The fourth section illustrates danger on the sea in verses 23–32. God can deliver his people from all troubles at sea, or prison, in sickness or foolishness or hunger and thirst. Therefore we can proclaim, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good" (v. 1).

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech

I once read someplace that there are two kinds of fools in this world: damned fools and fools for Christ. The preacher might use the image of a "fool" in the biblical sense as a major theme in a sermon on this psalm. One will note that the NRSV translates the word "sick" for "fool." Perhaps it would be possible to do a word study on "fool" in Proverbs, Psalms, and Wisdom literature. Then one could compare how Jesus and Paul used this word. Who knows what foolish things you might discover for you and your congregation during this season of Lent? DRB

Fifth Sunday in Lent
April 2, 2006

Jeremiah 31:31–34
Psalm 119:9–16
Hebrews 5:5–10
John 12:20–33

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds

Listen for the combination of the words "delight and God's word" in this section of Psalm 119. I wonder how many of our people equate keeping God's commands with a sense of delight.

This is the longest psalm in the entire collection of 150. For many, it appears unending, intimidating, and monotonous. Yet, this psalm is a masterpiece. It is shaped by the use of all twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the twenty-two sections begins with a letter in the alphabet. Then, each section has eight lines beginning with the same letter. Verses 9–16 use the second letter, ב, for each line.

The theme of Psalm 119 is the torah-centered life. God is our teacher, and we are God's students. The world is our classroom, and the lessons are about the "law/teachings" of God. The psalmist is like a young student seeking the wisdom of a pure life (v. 9).

God is the psalmist's teacher who guides him to keep and to remember God's torah in his heart (v. 11). The psalmist thanks God for God's gift of law and finds delight in keeping it, for it is more valuable than any material riches (vv. 14–16). Obedience to the word of God is a gift from God (v. 12).

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech

Here is a wonderful opportunity to preach on the delight and joy of God's instruction. We all are called to be disciples who are always learning and growing in the faith. Yet, I would venture to guess that most preachers know that the majority of their parishioners have quit studying the Scriptures. After all, some of them were confirmed and therefore have "graduated." Besides, they still know a few Bible verses and don't want to appear to be too fanatic.

And, to be honest, many people find the Bible boring and difficult. The Bible carries a sense of heaviness, work, and punishment. Now, what a difference there is between this understanding and the understanding of Holy Scripture in Psalm 119! Maybe the preacher could develop a sermon contrasting these two very different views in order to raise the importance of learning the Bible. DRB

Palm Sunday Procession
April 9, 2006

Mark 11:1–11
Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
Listen to the words of verse 26, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," as the congregation waves palm branches and enters the sanctuary on Palm Sunday.

This psalm is a thanksgiving celebration that probably was performed in a liturgy processional. When the worshipers arrive at the temple gates, the psalmist asks to be admitted: "Open to me the gates of righteousness" (v. 19). Those who enter through these gates are not "righteous persons" who have proven themselves worthy but persons who acknowledge that God has saved them (v. 21) through God's righteousness.

Verse 27 alludes to the processional arriving through the temple gates and approaching the altar. The people celebrate the new life in God with "branches" as they celebrate around the altar. Once again, a reference to the "steadfast love" of God is proclaimed at the end of the psalm in thanksgiving and praise.

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech
There usually is quite a celebration in our churches on Palm Sunday. People gather outside the sanctuary to receive and to bless the palms before entering the church. Children wave those branches as the church parade winds itself into the pews. Often there is no sermon but the reading of an entire gospel passion story.

If there is to be preaching, perhaps it could reveal the deep connection pointing back to this psalm as Israel anticipated the coming of a Messiah/King. Preachers might remind their listeners that Jesus appeared not in a cultural vacuum but in a deeply religious community whose world was psalm-filled. There were those followers who saw in Jesus the gates of righteousness being opened for everyone by that man riding on a donkey. DRB

Maundy Thursday
April 13, 2006

Exodus 12:1–4 (5–10), 11–14
Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19
1 Corinthians 11:23–26
John 13:1–17, 31b–35

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
Listen for the ancient words "the cup of salvation" (v. 13) during the Maundy Thursday celebration of Holy Communion.

Verse 1 is a unique beginning. Of all of the psalms, other than Psalm 18:1, this is the only one that starts with a declaration of "love" for God. "I love the Lord" sets the tone for the entire psalm. To love God is to call on the name of the Lord (v. 4), to find rest for your soul (v. 7), to walk with God in this life (v. 9), and to fulfill the vows you make to God (v. 14).

In the Greek and Latin Bibles, Psalm 116 is divided into two psalms: verses 1–9 appear as Psalm 114 and verses 10–19 as Psalm 115. This second section, verses 12–19, becomes a part of the liturgical worship for the Passover festival. During the meal, four cups are raised and blessed in remembrance of the Exodus story. Psalm 116:12–19 is read as the fourth "cup of salvation" is raised. The psalm celebrates the salvation and deliverance of Israel by the actions of God. The "cup of salvation" signifies that God has delivered God's people from death.

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech
Many churches reenact a Passover meal on this night. Others take communion in groups of twelve or reenact the Upper Room. Perhaps you wash feet and then celebrate the Eucharist. The preacher can use this psalm to talk about its use in the Passover. Or, the preacher might build on the image of the "cup of salvation." What does this "cup" mean to us and for us? Is the celebration of the Eucharist central to our lives? Do we find ourselves pulled to the table for communion with God and each other? How did Jesus speak about a "cup" in the Garden or with his disciples in the Upper Room? DRB

Good Friday
April 14, 2006

Isaiah 52:13–53:12
Psalm 22
Hebrews 10:16–25
John 18:1–19:42

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
In the stark and somber Good Friday liturgy, we listen to Jesus cry out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (v. 1).

When the Gospel writers tell the passion story of Jesus, Psalm 22 is the narrative Old Testament thread that weaves it together. There are thirteen Old Testament references in the passion narratives: eight come from the psalms, and five of those come from Psalm 22.

Most Christians recognize this psalm from its first words, quoted by Jesus on the cross. This is unlike other psalms, where the hearer might identify with the psalmist. Instead, Psalm 22 rings with the voice of Jesus, and we listen in the passion crowd. There are references throughout this psalm that coincide with Jesus' passion. Verse 7 is quoted in Mark 15:29 and Matthew 27:39; verse 8 in Matthew 27:43; verse 15 in John 19:28; and verse 18 in Mark 15:24, Matthew 27:35, Luke 23:34, and John 19: 24.

Psalm 22 is a prayer for help. Help is needed in three areas: God, others, and self. God's presence and care seem to be absent (vv. 1–2). Other people reject (vv. 6–8) and attack the psalmist (vv. 12–13; 16–16). Finally, there is the physical loss of strength and health (vv. 14–15)

Hear the words beyond the first verse of Psalm 22. This psalm is a prayer for help in verses 1–21. However, Psalm 22 makes a radical shift from prayer to praise in verses 22–31. My guess is that most worshipers don't notice this. I wonder what they would hear in this radical change of mood. See my comments on the praise section of this psalm in the notes for the Fifth Sunday of Easter.

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech
Every Good Friday, as Psalm 22 is being read in a bare and dark sanctuary, I always remember that someone once said that Jesus died singing. The writer was referring to Jesus' quoting Psalm 22 on the cross. I find it hard to reconcile a singing Jesus on this day; yet it is a powerful metaphor for me.

What do preachers preach on this day? Maybe the best preaching is to be quiet and let this psalm do the Holy Spirit's work. The whole Passion story is here; that is why the Gospel writers used it. But if you are to preach, then maybe a few words about how God does not abandon those who suffer but suffers with them and knows all about our dying. It's called Good Friday for a reason. DRB

The Resurrection of Our Lord April 16, 2006

Acts 10:34–43
Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24
1 Corinthians 15:1–11
John 20:1–18

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
Listen to the psalmist proclaim that "I shall not die, but I shall live" (v. 17) on Easter Day. This is the day that the Lord has made (v. 24), and we shout: Christ is Risen. Alleluia!

Hear the refrain of the words "steadfast love" sung four times in the first four verses. Steadfast love describes the character of God who will save and deliver his Exodus people. Steadfast love was incarnate in Jesus on Easter Day.

A second refrain is heard in verses 15–16: the "right hand of the Lord." Three times the Lord's right hand is victorious, mighty, and uplifted. The psalmist is echoing Moses' song in Exodus 15 where he too sings of God's "right hand" that saved them. On Easter Day, we celebrate Jesus Christ who sits at the "right hand of God."

Verse 22 recalls that the stone rejected by the builders as unsuitable becomes the cornerstone toward which the other building stones are oriented. A cornerstone usually suggests a big building, perhaps the Temple. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts quote this verse in reference to Jesus' rejection by Israel. Easter Day celebrates that the rejected stone (Jesus) is revealed as the true cornerstone (Messiah).

Listen to the praise of verse 24 singing the joy of this day "as a day the Lord had made." Sunday is such a day, because Christians rejoice in the "marvelous acts of God" (v. 23) being revealed in the flesh: Jesus Christ.

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech
On this Easter Sunday, Psalm 118 shouts "This is the day the Lord has made," for on this day Jesus rose from the dead! Nothing is ever the same again. On this day, God has done a marvelous thing because of his "steadfast love" in Jesus. God's "right hand" is victorious over sin, death, and the devil. Jesus returns to sit at his Father's "right hand" until the day of judgment.

Preachers can open the ears of their listeners to the wondrous words in this psalm that cry out for Alleluia. Not only was the cornerstone rejected by the builders, but the cornerstone named Jesus rejected another stone forever: the one that foolishly tried to keep him in the grave. Ha! DRB

Second Sunday of Easter April 23, 2006

Acts 4:32–35
Psalm 133
1 John 1:1–2:2
John 20:19–31

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
Listen to this psalm against the background noise of family gatherings, holidays, reunions, and worship.

Hear the sounds of affection as verse 1 proclaims the joy of being with kindred in unity. The word *kindred* refers to men and women who are in kin relationship to one another. They share a common history, tribe, ancestor, or name. Since all family gatherings are not necessarily harmonious, it is good and pleasant when this occurs.

Verses 2 and 3 repeat the Hebrew verb "to go down" in three places: running down

Aaron's beard, running down Aaron's collar, and falling dew. The image of oil running down is an image of consecration, plenitude, and generosity. Moses ordained Aaron by anointing his head with oil. All priests were anointed with the oil of Aaron on their heads. It glistened on their beards and their beautiful vestments. Priests presided over sacrifice and worship. This psalm reflects the festive sense of meal and worship.

Mount Hermon was famous for its abundant dew. It was an important source of water in the dry hot summers. There was so much dew that it "ran down" from the mountain in refreshing and life-giving excess.

Listen to the sound of God's blessings "running down" from the gracious Lord who gives life its goodness in community and praise.

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech

When, as preachers, we talk about family, we need to be very careful and very precise. The model of a traditional family with two parents and children is no longer the norm. Instead, there are single-parent families, divorced families, weekend children, blended families, and unmarried families.

Preachers know that conflict and brokenness exist in their own parish families. So when this psalm celebrates God's gift of unity in the family, we can all say "Amen." It is a wonderful blessing from God to have peace and unity in our personal families and in our church families. Maybe a sermon on this gift from God might strengthen, encourage, challenge, or raise some thankfulness in the new and different world of twenty-first–century families. DRB

Third Sunday of Easter
April 30, 2006

Acts 3:12–19
Psalm 4
1 John 3:1–7
Luke 24:36b–48

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds

Psalm 4 is a prayer for help by someone whose honor has been damaged by a lie. Listen to the cry of a person who has been slandered and humiliated by deceiving enemies.

The psalmist calls out to God for an answer to his pain. In verse 1, "give me room" literally means "wide." The word "distress" can be translated "narrow." One might say that God gives you room in a tight space because God is gracious.

It does not matter "how long" the enemies of the psalmist will slander him, because the psalmist belongs to God. God has "set apart" God's servants, and the honor of the psalmist is derived from God. God does hear his prayer (vv. 2–3).

The enemies of the psalmist should keep their anger within themselves and remain quiet. It is when they refuse to listen that they act on their evil actions. They also should offer sacrifices to God in worship and trust God. This would be the path of return to a proper relationship with God (vv. 4–5).

The psalmist declares his understanding of grace in verses 6–8. Instead of desiring material wealth in order to be fulfilled, the psalmist seeks the joy of trust in God. The gift of trusting God transcends any amount or value of material goods. With this in mind, sleep and peace go hand in hand.

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech
The preacher can probably assume that most people have experienced being in a tight jam—losing a job; a broken relationship; an illness; a rejection. The psalmist says that to be in a tight space is what it is like to be in distress.

God offers us wideness in our distress. God's graciousness expands the room around us so that we can breathe, think, and act. Now that gospel news will preach! If I'm not mistaken, sin, death, and the devil tried to distress Jesus in the grave. It didn't work, because it could not hold him. Jesus had so much love and grace and forgiveness and power that he blew that narrow, distressed, and stinking grave wide open. It's called the Resurrection, and that grave hole will never be shut again. DRB

Fourth Sunday of Easter
May 7, 2006

Acts 4:5–12
Psalm 23
1 John 3:16–24
John 10:11–18

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
Listen to this psalm in the melodies of funerals, weddings, baptisms, hospital visits, nursing homes, homebound visits, Good Shepherd Sunday, Vacation Bible School, and Sunday school. Cup your ear, because this psalm may be too familiar to really hear.

Hear how the psalm begins with the word "Lord" (v. 1) and ends with the word "Lord" in verse 6. Psalm 23 is framed at the beginning and at the end with the word "Lord," which is used only twice. Do we hear the assurance that the Lord is with us from beginning to end?

The Lord is a shepherd. Shepherds were protectors and providers for their sheep. Shepherds were also metaphors for kings: kings were to shepherd their people. Shepherds were to guide and to guard those in their care. The life of the sheep and the people depended on the shepherd. God, the shepherd of the psalmist, will provide all the necessities of life: pasture (food), water, shelter, and confidence in danger.

Listen to the "pursuing" God who will follow you with goodness and mercy throughout your entire life. You have a relationship with a Shepherd/Lord who will never forsake you or cause you to want.

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech
How does any preacher approach this psalm without a lifetime of images, feelings, and memories? Now imagine all of this magnified by people in the congregation. This psalm is an icon in the religious imagination of our culture.

Because this psalm is read on Good Shepherd Sunday, many people jump from John 10 to Psalm 23. Jesus is the good shepherd in this psalm. So perhaps the best any preacher can do is highlight some themes from Psalm 23 that might enrich the shepherd image used by Jesus. We hear the Lord named at the beginning and end of Psalm 23, suggesting that our whole life is framed by the presence of God. Baptism and our funeral liturgy could be possible resources for reflection. Also, there is that wonderful imagery and sound of being "pursued" and followed all the days of our lives. Jesus the Good Shepherd seeks the lost, finds us, feeds us, washes us, and never lets us go—even in death. Christ the Good Shepherd is Risen! Alleluia. DRB

Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 14, 2006

Acts 8:26–40
Psalm 22:25–31
1 John 4:7–21
John 15:1–8

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
Listen for the soft sound of the Resurrection in the praise of the psalmist as he proclaims that "all who sleep in the earth bow down" (v. 29). Hear the second half of this psalm sung during the Easter season as it was sung on the lips of our crucified Christ.

Praise destroys the traditional boundaries of race, religion, and history in verse 27. God is so magnificent that *all* the ends of the earth and *all* the families of the nations shall worship him. God's people include the whole world (Gen 12:1–3).

Listen to the power of praise celebrate God's majesty beyond space and time. Worship will continue even in dying and the dust of death itself (v. 29). Hear the low rumblings of "resurrection rhythm" begin in this psalm. Israel knows that nothing can defeat her God.

The role of the psalmist is to tell the story of God's mighty acts so that the future unborn will know God. God's servants will praise the deliverance of God by telling others what God has done. Alleluia!

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech
During the Easter season, some people come to church looking to discover whether it is true that Jesus lives and death is defeated. To really believe that God is so powerful and gracious that God would destroy death takes courage along with the Holy Spirit. Here is a magnificent psalm that begins to allude to God's power even in the dust of death. Early on, Israel knew that God could and would defeat all her enemies because of God's steadfast love and mercy. There would come a day when even death itself could not separate God's people from God's love. All it would take is for someone to be the firstborn of the dead. DRB

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 21, 2006

Acts 10:44–48
Psalm 98
1 John 5:1–6
John 15:9–17

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
Hear the Alleluias in this psalm during the season of Easter. Psalm 98 fills us with the sounds of song, music, and praise. Isaac Watts heard this psalm as he composed his famous Christmas hymn "Joy to the World."

Singing begins this psalm of praise. Hear the voices of choirs recalling the marvelous deeds of God (v. 1). Listen for the echoes of Exodus 15 as Moses sang about "marvelous things," "right hand," "holy arm," and "salvation." Verses 1–3 invite all of Israel to remember and to praise the character of God: steadfast love and faithfulness.

The second section in verses 4–6 raises the crescendo of praise to all the nations. All the earth is invited to sing and to praise God with joy and instrument. Praise is no longer limited to just Israel; all of the human community is included.

The full symphony of praise is reached when all of creation sings. The human choir and all its instruments are not sufficient to praise God's marvelous acts. Therefore the sea will roar and the flood will clap and the hills will sing for joy (vv. 7–8). Why? God is coming to judge humanity and the whole creation with love and righteousness.

Open Mouth/ Psalm Speech
If there is a dominant theme in this psalm, it is one of joy and praise. What a wonderful theme for the Easter season. The preacher might develop a sermon on the joy of worship. Remind the people of God that to worship God is the highest praise we can offer our Lord. It could be very transforming. One might point to the psalm's wonderful metaphor of hills singing and floods clapping in creation's response to the love of our Creator. This might help challenge our reluctance to worship or sing or pray on some Sundays as misplaced.

Better yet, the preacher could remind the people that the only thing that continues from the church in this world to the saints in heaven is worship! DRB

Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 28, 2006

Acts 1:15–17, 21–26
Psalm 1
1 John 5:9–13
John 17:6–19

Cupped Ear/Psalm Sounds
Psalm 1 announces the theme of obedience as the way to happiness in God's world. Hear the call to choose the path of the righteous or the path of the wicked. Listen for the sound of your feet.

Hear the first word of the Psalter, "Happiness." Since the beginning of humanity, people have sought to be happy or to be blessed. This is the goal for most people, and the answer to happiness is heard in Psalm 1.

The recommendation for happiness begins with three negative "no entry" signs on the wrong road. First, do not partake in the counsel of the wicked (v. 1). Second, do not stand in the way of sinners (v. 1). Third, do not sit among the scoffers who refuse the instructions of God (v. 1). There seems to be a progression from compliance to lingering to settling among the wicked. Be careful how you position your life among the sinful. Psalm 1 tells us that there is only one thing needed for happiness: to meditate on the torah/teachings of God. Hear the word *meditate* release its sound of intoning and murmuring of Scripture. Say and listen to the teachings of God every day and night, and you will find happiness (v. 2).

A righteous person will become like a tree that is "rooted" and "watered" in torah/teachings and will flourish in fruitful happiness and evergreen living. But the wicked will hear the sound of the wind blowing their chaff-lives aimlessly throughout the world (vv. 3–4).

We choose between two ways: the way that God knows and watches and the way of the wicked that comes to nothing (vv. 5–6).

Open Mouth/Psalm Speech
Easter is a good time for the preacher to remind the people of God that they were once called the people of The Way. Psalm 1 speaks of following God's way, or path. The preacher might deepen the call to "meditate." Many people think of meditation as a silent, detached experience. But the biblical understanding of meditation involves murmuring, intoning, speaking, or growling over the Scriptures. Could the preacher challenge her congregation to become more deeply engaged in the study of Scripture?

According to Psalm 1, happiness is discovered in putting one's whole self into the world of Scripture. Another benefit might be the discovery that a certain "rootedness" develops as one becomes deeply watered and fed by Scripture. A sermon on these topics might be well received in a "rootless" generation. DRB

Responses
are welcome!

Readers who would like to respond to any article published in *Currents* are invited to contact the editor by mail at the address below or by e-mail, rklein@lstc.edu.

Web sites
***produced by professors at the seminaries publishing* Currents**

Wayne Weissenbuehler (WTS): Rural Ministry
http://ruralministry.com

Ralph W. Klein (LSTC): Old Testament Studies
http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/

Gary Pence (PLTS): Healing Religion's Harm
http://healingreligion.com

Change of address?

If you are moving, please send your corrected mailing label, or a photocopy, or any change-of-address form, to *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615, or call (773) 256-0751, or FAX to (773) 256-0782 (specify *Currents*).

Whether you write or call, please include the six-digit code at the top left of your address label for our reference. Thank you.

Currents in Theology and Mission
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
1100 East 55th St.
Chicago, IL 60615

Non-profit org.
Bulk Rate
U. S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 26
Paxton, IL 60957