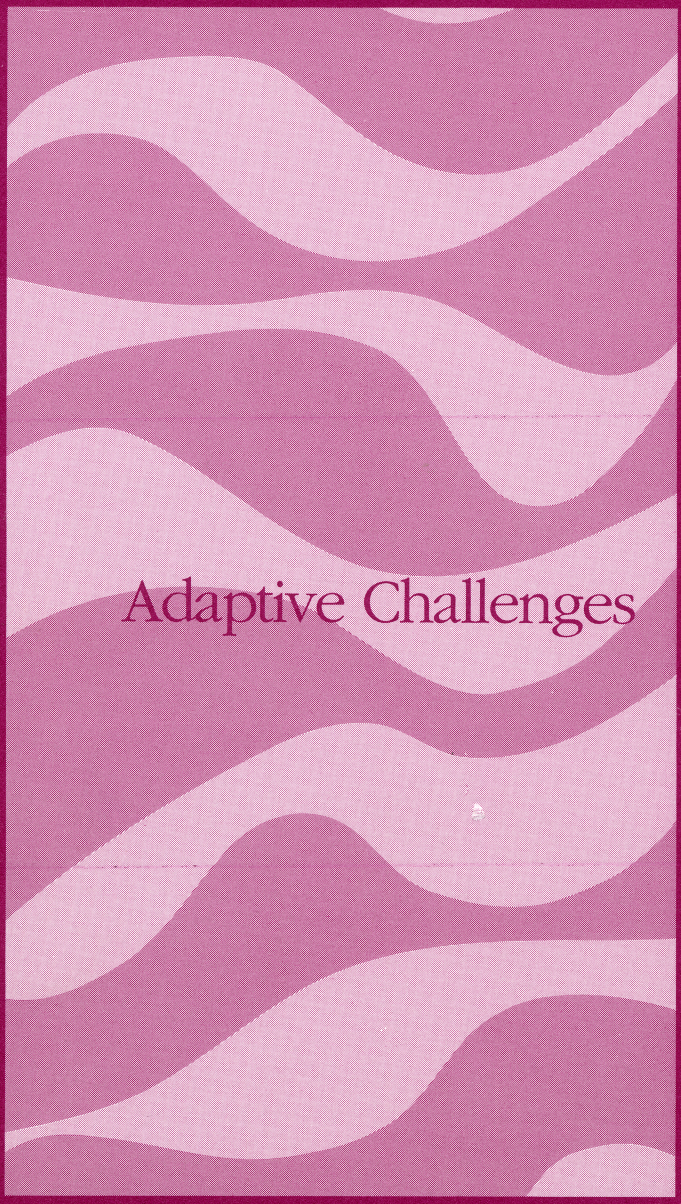
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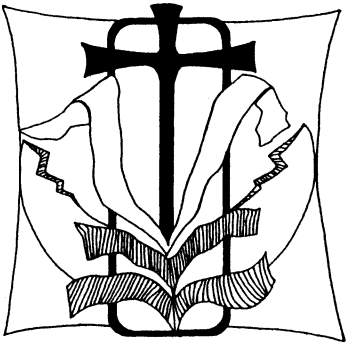
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Adaptive Challenges

At a recent Lilly conference in Indianapolis, I was treated to a spellbinding presentation by Ronald A. Heifetz about leadership. Heifetz teaches in the Kennedy School at Harvard and normally does his stuff before CEOs of Fortune 500 companies.* But the Lilly endowment thought he would have a lot to say to seminary types, and indeed he did. Adaptive challenges, in his telling, are those outside of our repertoire. Technical challenges are like changing the light bulb or figuring out who's going to clean the church. Adaptive challenges are more like the ones we face every day in the seminary—and in the parish. Adaptive challenges require a lot of time and a lot of learning. People come to (seminary and church) leaders figuring that the leader can fix "it." The good leader has to disappoint these expectations at a rate the people can stand. The people with the problem are the problem—and they are also the source of the solution.

Adaptive challenges in the church or in growing up force us to decide what to leave behind, what to continue, and when and how to innovate. Every meeting of the evangelism and worship committees (or the curriculum committee) ought to decide what to leave behind, what to continue, and where to innovate. People don't really resist change, Heifetz argued, but they resist the loss that accompanies some types of change. So what adaptive challenges are getting processed in the following essays?

Kjell Ove Nilsson notes that the real Luther is to some extent forgotten or locked up in a kind of Lutheran prison of narrow understanding. Anders Nygren urged us to move *forward* to Luther. We need to find Luther anew, behind all Lutheranism, beyond all confessional obstacles. Luther's theology of creation was incarnational—that is, the gospel resounds down here, on earth, in human life. That is where theology belongs also. The "naked God" is a metaphysical and abstract God whom we can never really know but who can still destroy us. The "God for us," on the other hand, is to be found in this world, in our kind of life here on earth, in flesh, in Jesus Christ. The church has the unique mission of painting Christ as the person Jesus from Nazareth,

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*Check out one of his books: *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Belknap Press, 1994) or *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Harvard Business School Press, 2002).

not as the terrible judge sitting on the rainbow. The human vocation is lived on earth, where it is needed, in its plain human context. Reclaiming Luther frees us from unnecessary philosophical and emotional garbage and makes us concentrate on real life in the real world.

In the months before his own death, the late **John H. Tietjen** wrote an extensive review of a recent book by N. T. Wright dealing with the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus provided evidence that the crucified Jesus is the messiah and the first fruits of resurrection for all who live and die in the messiah. In opposition to the Enlightenment, Wright argues that the resurrection of Jesus was historical, an event in history that can be discerned as other events are discerned. The accounts of Jesus' resurrection in the Gospels provide answers to these questions: Why did early Christianity begin? Why did it take this shape? There will be no waiting in eternity. Because God raised Jesus from the dead, our loved ones share already now in the resurrection that for us is still in the future.

Stephanie Harrison argues that Luke's view of justification, as illustrated in the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector, has as much to do with our social location and our willingness to show mercy as it does with an inner attitude of humility or of being right with God. She presents something of a legal case to discover what righteousness means for the Pharisee, the tax collector, and Luke. The Pharisees and the Jesus movement are best seen as competing reform movements within Judaism, the former appealing to an understanding of the covenant as "holiness" and the latter appealing to an understanding of covenant as "mercy." In the familiar story of the Pharisee and the tax collector, mercy replaces holiness and separation as the true test of alignment with the ways of God. For those with power, according to Luke, justification involves repentance or a turning back to God's ways of mercy. For those without power, justification is part of God's mercy being shown to them even when humans show them no such mercy. The place from which a person prays (the center or the margins) has everything to do with whether and how God justifies.

James Maxey demonstrates that the Emmaus episode in Luke echoes a central theme in the third gospel: God's plan to liberate Israel through the prophet-Messiah Jesus. Through the dialogue of a representative disciple and the unrecognized, resurrected Jesus, the narrator presents the points of view of all the disciples and of God. The disciples' hope of a triumphant Messiah were dashed with the death of Jesus but were then corrected by the teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures that depict a suffering servant. Once the disciples understand this vocation of the Messiah they recognize their traveling companion as their Lord and Christ. This episode challenges readers also today to reevaluate

their expectations about the role of Jesus in God's plan. God's revelation comes through the earthy, daily practice of servanthood. Preachers among our readers may find much food for thought in this narrative-critical study as they prepare to preach on the Third Sunday of Easter, April 10, 2005.

Nathan Montover rehearses the historical context of Article X of the Formula of Concord, which dealt with the adiaphoristic controversy of the sixteenth century. The Formula resolved the controversy between the Philippists, who were willing to compromise on this question, and the Gnesio Lutherans, who were unwilling to compromise. Some contemporary Lutherans have invoked this article of the Formula in their arguments about the recent Concordat between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church USA. The Formula's statements, however, were addressed to a situation in which secular authorities were imposing certain church usages on the church, whereas in the Concordat the ELCA's Churchwide Assembly made a legislative decision on behalf of their fellow members. The provisions of Article X of the Formula of Concord do not seem to apply.

John D. Lottes connects important insights from Sharon Parks about mentoring young adults with mentoring parallels about Jesus in the four Gospels. The evangelists selected episodes and sayings from the life of Jesus that would serve as mentoring encouragement to those facing specific threats to their newfound faith. Mentors recognize the promise and vulnerability of the young adult life; mentors are supportive advocates and sources of comfort; mentors practice a tough kind of love; mentors serve as steady, inspiring points of orientation; and mentors participate in the dialogue between fear and trust, power and powerlessness. Many of our congregations are connecting confirmation and college students and other young adults with mentors. These biblical reflections about the task of mentoring may offer significant help to those who mentor and to those who mentor the mentors.

Heifetz had a number of good one-liners. Fifty percent of our DNA is the same as that of yeast, which explains, perhaps, why we inflate so easily. Ninety-nine percent of our DNA is the same as that of the chimpanzee. That's both humbling and a reminder that one percent of change can make a huge difference. And, of course, it took a long, long time to add that one percent. Once more Heifetz: "Exercising leadership is a way of giving meaning to your life by contributing to the lives of others. At its best, leadership is a labor of love."

And my advice: Enjoy your adaptive challenges—that's why you're here.

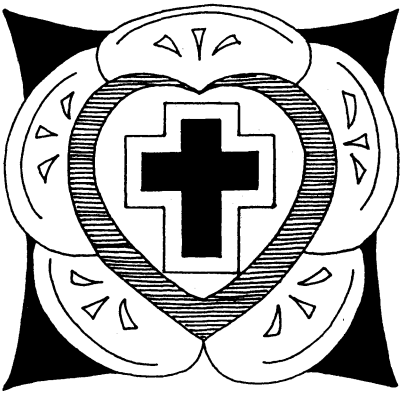
Ralph W. Klein, Editor

Martin Luther: Is He Still Relevant?

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Luther was a servant of Princes, a man who hated Jews and oppressed women. He has given people guilt complexes with his constant talk about sin; he made our lives boring; he made us into workaholics. He made it a virtue to have a bad conscience, and we are not supposed to have fun. We have to shun good food and a glass of wine. This is all Luther's fault!

It sounds like a joke, but such comments are rather common in the Lutheran country of Sweden, sometimes in newspaper and magazine articles but more often in advertisements or letters to the editor in daily papers. "Fight Luther within You" is perhaps the message, so that you may enjoy a nice flight with this or that airline without working yourself to death or relax with a good meal in some restaurant. Luther sits on your shoulder and whispers negative and bad things in your ear. And the common message is: Put him down! Get rid of him!



This attitude is, of course, very superficial and ignorant. It is simply not true—most of it. But it needs at least to be looked at from several perspectives.

The controversial Luther

Many examples of the controversial Luther were found in papers and books in 1983 when the 500th birthday of Luther was celebrated all over the world. Of course, such an anniversary was also the occasion for many serious and well-grounded writings among scholars and historians, as well as theologians. A big Congress for Luther Research was held in Erfurt in the German Democratic Republic (at the time), the place of his birth, where it all began. This anniversary was celebrated on five continents, particularly in minority locations, as well as in the big Lutheran majority churches like those in the Nordic countries and in Europe. It was celebrated in Santiago, Kuala Lumpur, Bukoba, and Madras as well as in Wittenberg, Lund, Helsinki, Minneapolis, and St. Louis. It was a worldwide phenomenon. Already that is interesting.

Celebrations are not altogether reliable sources for anyone who wants the truth. Many themes circled exactly around the question of the relevance of Luther. Is he forgotten, abused, debated, up to date, or what? It is a simple matter of fact that the *real* Luther is to some extent forgotten, and often misused, misinterpreted, or locked up in a kind of Lutheran prison of a traditional and rather narrow understanding. The picture of Luther today is quite a long way from that vivid, dynamic, unpredictable man from the early sixteenth century. I sometimes think of him as being like the good Samaritan who fell into the hands of robbers and was stripped and beaten (Luke 10:30). Today in the hands of the media Luther is maltreated and misrepresented—indeed, he has fallen in the hands of robbers. But at least this shows that Luther is still interesting to many and that he is actually relevant and important to discuss, though very controversial!

To some extent this is true also among those with a more serious approach, among Luther's most eager and devoted followers, particularly those who want to maintain a clear Lutheran label over and against all kinds of non-Lutherans or worse (whatever that could be). Some of his admirers have turned out to be robbers as well. Thus has Luther become the champion of a rather conservative, more or less apolitical, understanding of the world and human society due to a basically misinterpreted doctrine of the two kingdoms. It is, however, easy to show in Luther's writings how radical he could be in political issues and how active he was many times in his involvements and his preaching on the burning social problems of his time.

Another abuse of Luther is that he has been taken to be the spokesman for a consistent state-church system by many who have wanted to defend that system in the Nordic countries. But he himself fought decidedly and at times vehemently for the freedom of the church, both from despotic princes and from the authoritarian Roman Catholic Church of his time. He wanted to take the church out of "Babylonian Captivity," as he wrote already in 1520.

He also has been charged with being quite fundamentalistic in his view of the Bible, even though the contrary is true, especially in the way he applied the biblical texts in an almost modern historical critical manner. Furthermore, he was accused of representing a very pessimistic understanding of what it means to be a human being, born in sin and full of damnation, as if this sad expression of the human predicament were the only thing to be said in his anthropology, in spite of all his sermons on God's

beautiful creation and our calling to serve each other in love in our daily lives.

And he certainly did not want to be called a "Lutheran"! He wanted to reform the Roman Catholic Church, and he actually had a much more basic ecumenical view of the church. He was far from wanting to start a new church, worst of all named Lutheran. He found that both senseless and ridiculous.

The worst abuses of Luther are probably to be found among his successors and most devoted friends. Often they interpreted Luther's ideas in a very limited or narrow-minded way, though they no doubt meant well and wanted to preserve their great Reformer at his very best. But, as the saying goes, with friends like that, who needs enemies?

Luther today

What then does Luther mean today in the struggle for liberation in Third World countries, in the struggle for yet another liberation in the materialistic West, in an old well-established (too established) nationwide church such as the one in Sweden? How is Luther used, applied, exploited, put forth as an excuse, an accusation, a support? Quoted he is, and used he is! Can a closer study of Luther give us any guidance as to how Luther *ought* to be read and quoted and applied, or is that an altogether subjective question? Do we have to leave Luther and his many sermons and writings in the historical shadows of the sixteenth century?

From a methodological point of view, this is quite a problematic issue. In many camps it is a controversial and even ridiculed question. It is romantic and anachronistic to ask, for example, What would Luther say, had he lived today? It is suggestive and misleading and can easily serve as a cover-up for one's own favorite ideas. It is the same when we sometimes ask, What would Jesus say and do today? It can be helpful but also wrong and dangerous as a method of doing theology.

In the case of Luther, there are circumstances that differ from most other subjects of study, and this is to me a decisive point. Luther is not only a man of history, who can be studied in certain written sources, confined to a certain time of history; he is also one of the few men of history who is still, in a sense, "alive"—read and referred to in daily life in the present day. Luther's voice is still heard from thousands of pulpits all over the world. His ideas and viewpoints are part of many different faiths and lifeviews. You can study Homer or Plato or Dante or Shakespeare or Voltaire, and that can be most rewarding, interesting, and stimulating, but there are no churches or people's movements that carry over *their* names to our times. You can form literary and cultural societies, learned circles, etc., around any of these great figures and many others, but nobody would seriously ask what Plato or Voltaire would say today—even if we still might have things to learn from them.

But "Luther Today" is a possible topic. In the world today there are about 60 million people who are called Lutherans. Many of them ask what Luther's thinking means in many of today's issues—creation, resources, environment, attitudes toward oppressive governments, liberation movements, and people of different races, religions and cultures, attitudes toward different confessions of faith and ecumenical theology. Others are curious about Luther. Roman Catholics, Reformed, Methodists, and others are busy studying Luther, and they do it most seriously and with great ambition. And what is the typical and decisive point? They do it precisely because Luther is "alive" today, because his

theology seems to be of great significance far beyond Lutheran churches, and because there are Lutheran churches with which one can establish ecumenical relations, not simply because he is an important historical figure. What did Luther actually mean when he criticized the Roman Catholic Church in his time? How does Lutheran theology differ from Reformed-Calvinistic theology? These and other currents of history flow together in our time, and Luther is unusually "alive" in the midst of all of this. Today in theology and church life Luther is an inevitable factor. It is essential to know what he in fact taught.

This rather pragmatic reason for scientific Luther research today has another implication. The fact that Luther is what I have called "alive" has invited many good Lutherans to become more "Lutheran" than Luther himself. They quote Luther in season and out of season, any and every theological position is supported by the so-called Lutheran tradition, and consequently Luther is very much abused. There are many examples of this in the confessional, conservative Lutheranism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Today it is necessary also to ask the questions, What is Lutheran in comparison with other traditions? What can we learn from each other? Where are the limits and weaknesses of Lutheran theology? These questions are not only theological but also sociological and psychological. The Lutheran World Federation, for instance, has conducted studies several times during the last decades on themes like " The Identity of the Church," which is, in our context, also a question for the genuinely Lutheran understanding of the church and its theology. What is now left, so to speak, is a "trademark," criteria and signs of what Luther, in his context, was fighting for as the essence of Christianity. Can studies on Luther be a means of focusing and defining these distinctive features?

Many of these questions are systematic-theological questions, possible to raise only on the basis of historical critical Luther research. It is necessary to work with the given sources to try to determine where the decisive theological points of Luther's theology are to be found, and only then make the attempt to give an outline or a sketch of a Lutheran theology today, doing justice to those decisive points. This, in my opinion, is the way from the historical Luther to the Luther of today and to a contemporary theology.

In 1947, Bishop Anders Nygren spoke a watchword in Lund at the opening of the Lutheran World Federation: "Forward to Luther!" We need to find Luther anew, behind all Lutheranism, beyond all confessional obstacles. That means a new methodological and theological venture. Luther is well and alive—liberated, open, ecumenical.

Ecclesia semper reformanda: The church has to be continuously reformed. Why not also aim at continuous reform of theology and theological methods? It is, as a matter of fact, first during the last one hundred years or so, through the rise of modern Luther research, that this methodological approach has become possible at all, although it is still difficult. Another factor is just as important: Luther is now liberated not only from the static doctrinal ties of orthodox Lutheranism but also from most state-church authoritarian governing and monopolized interpretation. We still have confessional churches, but we do not find what is "Lutheran" in splendid isolation within them alone. On the contrary.

At the heart of Luther

Today we find Luther literally all over the place—not only as the founder of the

Lutheran Confession, which he was always very much against, but also as a theologian, preacher, and especially an interpreter of biblical texts. In these respects he is again alive and active. As Philip Melanchthon, Luther's close friend and colleague, said after the death of Luther in 1546, in an obituary testimony: *Et mortuus, vivit*—He is dead, but he lives.

Luther is, in other words, no longer confined to a certain authorized or even monopolized interpretation within the framework of a strictly confessional theology, having Luther "on contract," as it were, and defending him over and against other confessional theologies. Neither is he any longer locked up in Lutheran state churches, where he often would not have felt very much at home, were he physically alive in our midst. But for the past four hundred years that is where he has been held and protected. He was taken care of, used and imprisoned by princes, kings, political structures, scholarly institutions, churches, and bishops. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, a liberation process has begun, a liberation of Luther. This implies even a possible development of a "Lutheran" kind of "liberation theology" as well.

In the Wittenberg of 1520 there were as yet no Lutherans. There was a lot of reading of the Bible, a lot of people who prayed and struggled with their faith, but no Lutherans. There was a Christian plurality. But before long the split was there, the division, the consolidation, isolation, and stabilization of Lutheranism. The main concern of Lutheran orthodoxy and the national Lutheran churches of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was not, as it had been for Luther, to confess the Christian faith or to present the whole of the gospel but to confess Lutheran faith in defense over and against others, often by oppressing and persecuting these others. For this very reason many fled the Nordic countries to form free churches in a new country, the United States! (Of course, no Lutheran theologian I know would admit that his particular Luther interpretation would not coincide with what was Christian in general and Lutheran in particular.)

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries a liberation process has begun, a liberation of Luther.

Today a new situation is developing rapidly. Luther is gradually freed; he appears in the most different camps, and one can now agree with what he says without being labeled "Lutheran." Now we have a new pluralism, on a global level, more or less, similar to Wittenberg of 1520. Gone is compulsory unity and enforced attachment. Gone is the legal authority of Luther. Now he *speaks* only. He speaks in Rome. He speaks in Geneva as well as in Wittenberg, just as he once spoke, lectured, preached, and argued, but then only in Wittenberg. He is the exegete, the interpreter, the Bible reader. And so he speaks in conversations and dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church, with Baptists, Reformed, and so on. He speaks in churches that by no means are Lutheran or have any Lutheran confessions. At the same time, Lutheranism as a state-protected, more or less civil institution is dissolving more and more.

I suggest that this creates a new situation for our own understanding of Luther.

It is not, and should not, be possible to do theology in a vacuum. Such an enterprise is first of all contrary to Luther himself, however much we might quote from his writings. This is not only due to historical circumstances but also because it is contrary to the very basis of his theology. Luther gave us a compass. Later Lutheran orthodoxy tried to draw a full map. He gave us the key, not the whole door! To illustrate, think of the differences between a painting that is full of life and sunshine and rain, and the dry, scientifically complete weather report, words that plainly just report about the daily rain. Luther never did theology in a vacuum; he always stood with both his feet on the ground, and there, in daily life, on the streets of Wittenberg, in marriage and family life, in struggling with the Pope, with the *Schwärmertum*, the spiritualists, enthusiasts, and so on, with princes and peasants—there, concretely and down to earth, was the place for his theology. That is also the reason why he always criticized those learned doctors who climbed the ladder to heavenly speculations and abstract philosophizing.

Particularly significant and important for today's theology is Luther's theology of creation. Currently a great deal of theology hovers above, floats in the air, without that existential anchor in the world of creation, without being down to earth, *contextual* in the real sense of the word. The point of a theology of creation is immediately and indissolubly connected with Luther's theology of incarnation. The Word became flesh, and this must also be true of the word of theology. To Luther this was always the most definite part and piece of his theology and the entire foundation for his total theology throughout the years. The Word becomes flesh—in church life, in preaching, in sacrament, in society, and in theology. Nothing else is possible for Luther. The gospel resounds here, on earth, in human life. That is where theology belongs, and where it has to start and end. This is essential to Luther's theology—its basis and heart, the point of departure on the road to all the following points.

Luther's understanding of creation as a *continuous* creation has a parallel in his concept of the church as being in a constant process of reformation, *semper reformanda.* So also his theology. All the time we are called upon to try to understand what that means today, Luther's theology is never a tight, finished, cut-and-dried system with certain doctrines always given, such and such. There are always open windows, so to speak, allowing for new winds of the Spirit, new contexts, new interpretations. Luther is still alive!

This means that we can never use Luther as some fundamentalists use the Bible. The theological point he wanted to make once in a certain context might very well look quite different in another context. It is tempting to refer to Luther only in a formal sense, imitating him. But then, one might do something totally different. Yes, it could happen that you might seem to be unfaithful to Luther just when you are most genuinely with him. This is contextual theology at its best. It is Lutheran theology at its best.

Ten relevant points

Following are ten basic points in Luther's theology that I see as most relevant and significant today.

1. *God and me.* When Luther describes human life, he always starts with creation, in the existential conditions of everyone. Adam is the man now, and I am Adam. Luther confesses his creed in his Catechism and talks about *me*: God has created me, provides and protects me; Jesus is *my* Lord, who has redeemed me; the Holy

Spirit has called me, and so on. Luther's use of pronouns is characteristic of his theology, in all three articles of the Apostles' Creed. We are contemporary, here and now, with Adam, with creation and fall, with Jesus, with the first Easter and the first Pentecost. I am with it all and part of it all. This is contemporary theology. And it is Luther's theology.

2. *Law and gospel.* Luther is always down to earth. In many variations this is his contribution to contemporary theology. He talks about the law, what is God's will from the beginning of creation, and in doing so he also talks about daily work and struggle, frustrations and tensions, coercions and anxieties. All of this is very human and very common. Luther says that this is how God is active with his *left hand*—in creation, through the laws. He also works with his *right hand* through the gospel, in the kingdom to the right, the spiritual realm. This is why there is a church: so that the gospel may be sounded. Both of God's activities are divine, and each is just as divine as the other in society, in professional work and daily occupation out there in the world, in marriage, in business, in school, and in church life, in preaching and sacraments. God is active in his Word in all, to the left and the right. But all is done in this world, down to earth, through simple things and common circumstances, where not even the word "God" seems to belong or is very seldom used. Yet it is divine activity. I think this is a good starting point for doing relevant, existentially meaningful theology.

3. Luther's *down-to-earth perspective* continues as he takes a low, very human point of view in describing the negative sides of life, the destructive factors, the tyrants, that threaten to destroy God's good creation. God is always at work, because to create is always to make something new (*creare est semper novum facere*), and creation is to Luther always *creatio continua*, a continuously ongoing creation. But the same is true about the constantly active devil, whom Luther saw everywhere, active, right here in daily human life. This antagonistic point of view with its constant struggle between God and Satan goes on in Luther simultaneously with his faith in the living Lord, the Creator and Sustainer. Luther finds both everywhere, in all human relations, in family life, in the state as well as in the church. This is another realistic view of human life that has great significance today, when we see what is going on in the world. It is quite possible to find interesting parallels, for example in modern drama or in the field of psychology.

4. What is Luther's *understanding of God*? There is a basic dualism in his concept of God that comes to the fore in the antagonistic battle between God and Satan. But it is also a dualism of God's love and God's wrath, a dualism in God's own essence and will, which has to do with Luther's way of understanding the "hiddenness" of God, the polarity, the connection between *Deus absconditus*, the hidden God, and *Deus revelatus*, the revealed God. Among those "tyrants" which God in Christ had to fight in a decisive way—sin, death, hell, etc.—there is sometimes also God's will, wrath, law, and judgments.

But the God revealed in Jesus Christ is a God of love. This is God in his essence, in his fatherly heart. In Christ God has, as it were, stepped out of his own secret existence and entered our world. But it is the same God, the only God. Any other God than that is a dangerous one, like one of the "tyrants." The naked God, *Deus nudus*, is different from the incarnate God in Christ, *Deus incarnatus*, the one with human clothes. There the terrible and angry God disappears. That one is a metaphysical and

abstract God, whom we never can get to know but who still can destroy us. That God is horrifying to the sinner and his conscience. We have to run away from that God to the God in flesh, for only there is a merciful God to be found. This is the God of the gospel and the only way to salvation. This is, then, the deeply significant incarnational theology of Luther: The divine is not another world, a transcendent world—and if he is, he is not the God "for us." The God for us, *pro nobis*, is to be found in faith just in this world, in our kind of life on earth, in flesh, in Jesus Christ.

The church has always tried to make the simple humanity of Christ divine, too divine . . .

5. This point concerns the *theology of the Word.* In this world of creation and fall, the Word is resounding, both as law and as gospel, against all evil forces, against the abuse of God's world and creation and against sin, despair, and judgment. It is all the activity of God in and through his Word, in several meanings. God is not confined to church activities, not locked up in the church, not active only through apparently holy or divine means. Here Luther is very contemporary. His whole theology points to a desacralization and demythologization of the exclusively divine, the holy, defined in terms of a "high" church theology. God in the really human: That means a kind of secularization, an emphasis on humanness, wordliness, on earth itself, flesh and common life, which is a very liberating factor in Luther's theology. God is freed from theological and spiritual confinements. God is not first of all religious, he is human, he has a body of the incarnate Word. Therefore this Word is a "living word," a *viva vox*, which you can hear in the churches, first of all, because faith comes from hearing, *ex auditu*, as Paul says (Rom 10:17). The Bible is part of the incarnation as well. The Word has become words, in a historical context, in human things and circumstances, in terms of creation here on earth.

6. This brings us to *Christ and his church.* Here we find in Luther that same low point of view: the refugee-child from Bethlehem, the tormented man on the cross, lonely and abandoned. Now he is apparent, visible, tangible in the church in simple water and bread and wine, and in the words of forgiveness spoken by sinful human beings. But the church has always tried to make the simple humanity of Christ divine, too divine, to lift him up, to give to his human nature a divine hypostasis (or something similar), a divine magnificence and polish, which in the final analysis takes away the flesh and blood from this man Jesus of Nazareth.

Luther saw this more clearly, I would say, than anybody else in the history of the church. Again and again he admonishes his listeners to start from below, "*von unten*," and to stay there—because there, and nowhere else, is God. The church has the unique mission "to paint Christ" as the man Jesus of Nazareth, not as the terrible judge sitting on the rainbow, as Luther could put it. The church is now the communicator and the distributor of the humanity of God. Here is forgiveness of sin; here is life and salvation, as Luther says in the Small Catechism. But when the church denies or obscures this incarnational lowness and human reality of God in this world,

this man-made God in Christ seems to appear all the more outside of the church, in the world, in the smallest of brethren!

7. Here we focus on *the Christian life and sanctification.* It is in such a world that Christians are called to live, in their baptism and their vocation, and with all these small brothers and sisters. All of it is again very low and dry, very human and insignificant, without divine splendor. On the contrary, life in the daily calling, in the common occupations, is "without name" (*hat keinen Namen*), without great labels or headlines, and yet this is where God has put us as his "co-creators," his collaborators in his continuous creation. This is the theme of Luther's interpretation of Mary in the Magnificat. She is a nice, diligent woman who does her simple things and is right then and there the one who carries God in her womb. God creates *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, in the most trivial round of life. And so it is also love, hidden in relationships between human beings. It is even a "lost love"—"*eine verlorene Liebe*"—the love for the neighbor. We may be tempted to do something particular, something well regarded and appreciated, something holy and spiritual, some newly invented church activity perhaps, something highly moral or religious, in other words something with names—on the front page of a magazine or on Oprah's sofa. Instead, we are called to do what is "at hand"—without names, down to earth, when it is needed, just in its plain human context. This expresses the incarnational process.

8. This view of the human daily life on earth is important because it is immediately connected with Luther's understanding of *justification.* It is also the other side of the desacralization of the world. No particular sacredness or holiness has to be claimed for different things and actions in this world; they are already divine and holy because they originate in God's creation! When human works and deeds are liberated from their divine holiness and splendor, justification through faith without works can correspondingly appear as God's work, clean of human achievements, by God's grace alone. This implies that human works and good deeds are given back their rightful place, in creation, in daily life, in the world; they are also liberated and "clean." There is nothing religious about them, since they are ruled by reason and civil law—and love. There is no room for a premeditated works-righteousness.

So, when Luther is critical of justification through works, he is at the same time—and this is necessarily so—critical of the flight away from the low, common everyday life of work and human responsibilities in family and society. The monastic life is, in principle, wrong. It tries to gain advantages before God and obtain righteousness through a supposedly better life with more divine occupations and more heavenly thoughts. On the contrary, says Luther, this is all of the devil, self-chosen things and deeds, and not at all divine, because such efforts are against the word of God and the will of God. Instead I can rest in God's grace through Jesus Christ and the word of the gospel, rely on him, and then go ahead in my daily work and life together with my neighbor, without strain and frustration. This is why Luther can lift up the servant girl he sometimes talks about: the maid who in faith sweeps the floor is easily more holy than the holiest monk. Faith is active and incarnate in love, in the smallest and most insignificant things in everyday life. I think this is a liberating message to many people today who live under a lot of pressures of various kinds.

9. So we arrive at a decisive point, the *twofold extra nos perspective.* There is in Luther's theology a relaxed and self-evi-

dent confidence, down to earth, based on the fact that I do not have to construct and build up my own righteousness. I can simply dare to be human. My works are done for my neighbor, without particular "Christian" motivation or in order to gain any credits or special favors. This very relaxed and uncomplicated lifestyle is obtained only by finding a home base, as it were, outside of myself. This perspective is very characteristic of Luther's theology. The emphasis is on *extra nos*, "outside of ourselves." That implies both an assurance of God's grace and salvation, and an unconstrained relation to my neighbor in love. *Extra nos* has two directions: one to God, when I rest in faith in the word of God's righteousness, the other to my neighbor, when I live in love and in my vocation, the daily calling in this world. This distinction was always very important to Luther: what is true before God, *coram Deo*, and what is true before people, *coram hominibus*. Both of these perspectives, these kinds of outwardness, are human—the external word, the worldly life, the neighbor with flesh and blood. This is all baptismal life, good human life, good Christian life. And here Luther is again a challenge to our lifestyle today.

10. This then is the continuing significance of Luther today in his *total interpretation* of Christian faith and life: the lowliness and outwardness, the creational and incarnational perspective on all points and parts of his theology, his affirmation of the world, the body, and the humanness—which is at the same time an acknowledgment of the kingdom of God in this world and God's saving and life-giving presence. To be a Christian is to live in the humanity of Christ, in the Word, and in the neighbor. It is in the world that this life is lived and developed; there are both the cross and the joy of Christ, both his death and his resurrection, concealed and yet at the same time revealed in his humanity.

This feature—*the humanness of God*—is what gives Luther's theology its significant character, a character of dynamic reality, of flexibility, of vivacity and change, while on the same solid stable foundation, outside of ourselves, in God alone and his grace and his Word. This *extra* has to be acknowledged, according to Luther, and yet we find it only *intra*, that is, in ourselves, in this world, in incarnational categories. This accounts also for the features of paradox and mystery in his whole theology, which in this respect is a "modern," even "postmodern," characteristic of doing theology, never fully completed, always open to new horizons and new possibilities. Luther is still relevant in his theological method and foundation.

We need to find ways to express and communicate this character of Luther's theology with regard to today's issues in church and society, while still retaining the genuine historical Luther as the Reformer, who himself wanted to do a theology which is *semper reformanda*. This way of doing theology has a liberating power. It frees us from unnecessary philosophical and emotional garbage and makes us concentrate on real life in the real world. In this basic and decisive respect there is still a lot to learn from Luther. So, to use Nygren's expression, maybe we should once more move *forward* to Luther.

A Book Worth Discussing: *The Resurrection of the Son of God*

John H. Tietjen†

The Resurrection of the Son of God. By N. T. Wright. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003. xxi and 817 pages. Cloth. $49.00.

"If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Cor 15:17–19).

So the apostle Paul concludes his response to those Christians in Corinth who argued against the resurrection of the dead. For me the apostle's point is very personal. If Christ has not been raised, I have been living and proclaiming a lie.

N. T. Wright's masterful work on the resurrection argues cogently and persuasively that the unanimous witness of the New Testament is that God raised Jesus from the dead and that, because God did, the followers of Jesus will also be raised. The resurrection of Jesus, Wright affirms, was for the Christians of the New Testament the evidence that the crucified Jesus is the Messiah and that his resurrection is the first fruits of resurrection to come for all who live and die in the Messiah. In the process Wright demolishes the notion that for Paul the resurrection was spiritual, not physical.

While asserting that his book is primarily "positive and expository," Wright states at the outset that he intends to challenge what he calls "a broadly dominant paradigm for understanding Jesus' resurrection," a paradigm "widely accepted in the worlds of scholarship and of mainline churches" (p. 7). Wright describes this dominant paradigm as follows:

> (1) that the Jewish context provides only a fuzzy setting, in which 'resurrection' could mean a variety of different things; (2) that the earliest Christian writer, Paul, did not believe in *bodily* resurrection, but held a 'more spiritual' view; (3) that the earliest Christians believed, not in Jesus' bodily resurrection, but in his exaltation/ascension/glorification, in his 'going to heaven' in some kind of special capacity, and that they came to use 'resurrection' language initially to note that belief and only subsequently to speak of an empty tomb or of 'seeing' the risen Jesus; (4) that the resurrection stories in the gospels are late inventions designed to bolster up this second-stage belief; (5) that such 'seeings' of Jesus as may have taken place are best understood in terms of Paul's conversion experience, which itself is to be explained as a 'religious' experience, internal to the subject rather than involving the seeing of any external reality, and that the early Christians underwent some kind of fantasy or hallucination; (6) that whatever happened to Jesus' body (opinions differ as to whether it was even buried in the first place), it was not 'resuscitated', and was certainly not 'raised from the dead' in the sense that the gospel stories, read at face value, seem to require. (p. 7)

Wright is Canon Theologian at Westminster Abbey and SPCK Research Fellow. This book is the third volume in a

series titled Christian Origins and the Question of God. In the first volume, *The New Testament and the People of God,* Wright described and defended his preferred historical method, which he calls critical realism. He exemplified the method further in the second volume, *Jesus and the Victory of God,* and employs the method throughout in the present third volume.

In direct opposition to the claims of the Enlightenment, Wright affirms that the resurrection of Jesus was historical. Jesus raised from the dead was an event in history that can be discerned as other events are discerned. It is at the same time the crucial evidence of the truth of Jesus' claim about the inbreaking of God's rule and the beginning of the age to come. Far from simple resuscitation, Jesus' resurrection meant that he was alive again in a transphysical body.

Wright waits until the end of his book to take up an analysis of the accounts of Jesus' resurrection in the four Gospels. He begins the book with the context in which Jesus and the first Christians lived: the Hellenistic world, which for Jews like Jesus and the first Christians was dominated by the worldview and language of second-Temple Judaism.

That context did not allow for the modern way of speaking that equates resurrection with life after death. The Greek world allowed no room for resurrection. Homer, whose works Wright identifies as the Old Testament of the Greeks, was pessimistic about the state of the dead; at best the dead were "shades" in an unpleasant underworld. Plato, whose writings Wright identifies as the New Testament of the Greeks, envisioned death as the soul's liberation from its prison in the body for life in a much more pleasant Hades. Resurrection meant life *after* life after death, and that was impossible for all Greeks, Homeric or Platonic.

At the time of Jesus and the New Testament the world of second-Temple Judaism was dominant among Jews and with it the teaching that on the day of the Lord God would raise the dead bodily, some for life with him and others for destruction, a view held by the Pharisees and denied by the Sadducees. Wright maintains that the New Testament view of resurrection is a major modification of the second-Temple view, according to which the crucified Jesus, who was truly the Messiah, was raised from the dead to signal the onset of God's new age and to be the representative figure for all of his followers, who will be raised with him at his second coming. Resurrection in the New Testament, Wright asserts, is life after life after death, though very little is said in the New Testament about "life" between death and resurrection. Paul affirms that it is to be with the Lord, and John the Seer pictures the dead as under the altar of God in heaven praying for vindication. As in the Nicene Creed "the life of the world to come" flows from "the resurrection of the dead."

After describing what the apostle Paul has to say about resurrection in his other writings, Wright analyzes the apostle's views in First and Second Corinthians. What Wright has to say about the verse translated "It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:44) has made it clear to me that whenever I read that verse publicly again, I will have to provide a translation of my own. The contrast in the Greek is between *soma psychikon* and *soma pneumatikon.* Whatever else those terms may mean, Wright points out that they do not mean the modern contrast between physical and spiritual. The word *psychikon* has to do with soul or human life but is 180 degrees different from what we mean by physical. The contrast is between a "psychic body" and a

"pneumatic body." Paul is contrasting the life of this present age with its burden of sin and corruption and the life of the age to come, fully energized by the Spirit. In both terms, however, the life is that of a body. Resurrection life is therefore the transphysical life energized by God's Spirit.

When Wright finally deals with the accounts of Jesus' resurrection in the four Gospels, he says that what they have in common attests to their early (pre-Paul) oral circulation. What they have in common is (1) their silence in reference to the Scriptures, (2) their absence of expressions of personal hope, (3) their strange portrait of Jesus, and (4) the presence of women in the stories. These common factors are surprising if, as most scholars affirm, the resurrection narratives are later writings, "a back-projection of later theology," or "coded message in support of the political or leadership claims of the disciples involved." Rather, Wright asserts, the stories are

> answers to the question: why did early Christianity begin, and why did it take this shape? The answer is: because the early Christians believed that something had happened to Jesus after his death, something to which the stories in the four canonical gospels are as close as we are likely to get. (pp. 614–15)

In a chapter on "Easter and History" Wright asserts that two things about the first Easter must be regarded as historically secure: the empty tomb, and the meetings with Jesus. He summarizes his argument as follows:

> 1. To sum up where we have got so far: the world of second-Temple Judaism supplied the concept of resurrection, but the striking and consistent Christian mutations within Jewish resurrection belief rule out any possibility that the belief could have generated spontaneously from within its Jewish context. When we ask the early Christians themselves what had occasioned this belief, their answers home in on two things: stories about Jesus' tomb being empty, and stories about him appearing to people, alive again.
>
> 2. Neither the empty tomb by itself, however, nor the appearances by themselves could have generated the early Christian belief. The empty tomb would be a puzzle and a tragedy. Sightings of an apparently alive Jesus, by themselves, would have been classified as visions or hallucinations, which were well enough known in the ancient world.
>
> 3. However, an empty tomb and appearances of a living Jesus, taken together, would have presented a powerful reason for the emergence of the belief.
>
> 4. The meaning of resurrection within second-Temple Judaism makes it impossible to conceive of this reshaped resurrection belief emerging without it being known that a body disappeared, and that the person had been discovered to be thoroughly alive again.
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> 5. The other explanations sometimes offered for the emergence of the belief do not possess the same explanatory power.
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> 6. It is therefore historically highly probable that Jesus' tomb was indeed empty on the third day after his execution and that the disciples did indeed encounter him giving every appearance of being well and truly alive.
>
> 7. This leaves us with the last and most important question: what explanation can be given for these two phenomena? Is there an alternative to the explanation given by the early Christians themselves? (pp. 686–87)

If Christ has not been raised, I have been living and proclaiming a lie.

After presenting and evaluating the alternative explanations given since the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment, Wright finds these explanations to be his-

torically unsatisfying. He concludes: "The proposal that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead possesses unrivaled power to explain the historical data at the heart of early Christianity" (p. 718).

For the believer at death the consummation of the age to come is now. There is no waiting in eternity.

In a final chapter Wright takes up the issue of the meaning of Jesus' resurrection for the worldview of the first Christians. Beginning with Paul's assertion that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God . . . by resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1:4), Wright affirms that for the first Christians the resurrection of Jesus meant first of all that he was Israel's Messiah, the one long-promised to inaugurate God's new age. Second, as Messiah Jesus was also "Lord," a political claim made in opposition to the claim that the emperor was Lord. Not only was Jesus Israel's Messiah and as Lord the reality for which Caesar was a parody; as son of the Creator and Ruler of the world Jesus was also "the personal embodiment and revelation *of* the one true god [sic]" (p. 731; emphasis in original).

Wright is consistent and insistent in affirming that Christian hope is in two stages, as it was in the case of Jesus. Resurrection is life *after* life after death. Death brings an end to our life in this present age. After an interval of time—for Jesus on the third day, for his followers at the consummation of the age to come—bodily resurrection brings death to an end.

I share Wright's conviction that the Christian hope for resurrection to the life of the world to come is grounded in Jesus' resurrection on the third day after his death by crucifixion. But Christians in the twenty-first century have a worldview different in some respects from that of New Testament Christians. We have become convinced by the views of scientists that we live in an expanding universe shaped by a space-time continuum. Space-time is part of the created order and shares in the burden of brokenness that characterizes life in the present age. For us who live in the world of space-time bodily resurrection is indeed in the future, and we are limited by the space-time constraints of life in this present age.

But God is eternal, and when we die we go to be with God in eternity, which is no longer governed by space-time. We leave space-time behind. For the believer at death the consummation of the age to come is now. There is no waiting in eternity. Bodily resurrection is no longer future but now. So, when we lay loved ones to rest "in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Occasional Services*, p. 126), we can comfort our hearts with the confidence that, because God raised Jesus from the dead, our loved ones share already now in the resurrection that for us is still in the future.

The Case of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector: Justification and Social Location in Luke's Gospel

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The episode

But he [Jesus] also spoke this parable for the sake of certain ones, ones who have confidence in themselves that they are just and who despise the rest.

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying these things: 'O God, I thank you because I am not just like the rest of humanity: swindlers, unjust ones, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice during the week. I tithe everything that I acquire.'

But the tax collector, stopping far off, did not even want to lift his eyes toward heaven, but instead he was beating his breast saying, 'O God be merciful to me, the sinner!'

I say to you all that this one went down to his house justified rather than the other, because all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted."[1]

Introduction

Luke's brief account of the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9–14) presents a seemingly simple story of pride in one's own accomplishments turning into contempt for others who don't measure up. In the narrative, the Pharisee thought he was just but went home unjustified, while the tax collector knew he was unjust and God justified him. It seems to be an open and shut case of humility winning out over self-exaltation. Despite the obvious interpretation, this case deserves a second look.

Without firsthand knowledge of Pharisees or first-century tax collectors, we are left with biased biblical witnesses about these characters ringing in our ears. We are made deaf both to the nuances and to the shock of the story. We may find it too easy to identify with sinful tax collectors and too easy to vilify Pharisees. Or, perhaps most dangerously, we may fall into the trap of believing that a humble attitude about our circumstances—our sin and our position in society—is enough to warrant our own justification.

Throughout this essay, I argue that Luke's view of justification has as much to do with our social location and our willingness to show mercy as it does with an inner attitude of humility or of being right with God. Given this supposition, the reason the tax collector is justified goes beyond his penitent attitude. He is justified because he occupied a marginal position within society. And from this position, where he received no mercy from others, he recognized

1. Luke 18:9–14, my translation. All further translations also are mine, unless notated as from the NRSV.

his own need before God. On the other hand, the Pharisee remains unjustified because his central position in society gives him power and authority to show mercy to others, which he fails to do with respect to the tax collector.

In this paper, I present this story as something of a legal case, a framework that allows for a thorough investigation of what righteousness means to the Pharisee, to the tax collector, and ultimately to Luke. I am choosing to present this story as a "case" for three reasons. First, while this story is often linked to the preceding story of the persistent widow and the wicked judge (18:1–8) by virtue of the common subject matter of prayer, the two stories are also linked by a host of "righteousness" or "justification" words.[2] Second, one of the historical contexts for speaking of justification or righteousness was a legal one.[3] Finally, exploring the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector as a legal case serves as means to "hear" both sides, while exploring what constitutes justification for Luke.

Challenges of the case

There are two main areas of knowledge that we need to set aside while undertaking this inquiry. First, Paul's spin on justification is a difficult paradigm to shed, even briefly. It is easy for us to assume that Paul's notion of "justification by faith through grace apart from works" is the same notion of justification as Luke, Matthew, or John might have. However, for the sake of this inquiry, it is necessary to bracket any Pauline understanding of justification. For this reason, I use words that are less theologically loaded, such as "align" or "upright" and "unaligned" or "upside-down."

Second, we need to set aside our preconceived notions of Jesus, the Pharisee, and the tax collector. We are accustomed to a Jesus who opposes the Pharisees and who befriends tax collectors and sinners. We are accustomed to identifying ourselves with the tax collectors and sinners and distancing ourselves from the Pharisees. This acculturation to the text removes much of the force of the story. We must bracket what we know of Jesus and must hunt to find the real story of the Pharisees, the tax collectors, and the sinners.

Opening arguments: Expectations of justification

Pharisees as holy. From the Pharisee's point of view, his case is open and shut in the story. He is clearly upright according to the law, according to covenant tradition, and according to his own self-assessment. However, Luke presents Pharisees in a much different light. In order to understand how Luke is portraying Pharisees as different from the norm, it is helpful to explore background information on Pharisees in general.

First, Pharisees saw themselves as preserving covenant relationship to God by practicing holiness. Originating in the time of the Maccabees, the name "Pharisee" is

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2. In the Greek, "righteousness" and "justification" are etymologically linked. English translations obscure the same Greek root (δικε-). For instance, see "grant justice" in 18:3, 5, 7, 8 (ἐκδίκησόν, ἐκδικήσω, ἐκδίκησιν), "opponent" in 18:3 (ἀντιδίκου), "unjust" in 18:6, 11 (ἀδικίας, ἄδικοι), "just" in 18:10 (δίκαιοι), and "having been justified" in 18:14 (δεδικαιωμένος).

3. Three primary uses of justification words in the first century included relational fidelity (covenant), forensic justification (modeled on the legal system, where people are vindicated as "upright"), and restoration of right relationship. See A. Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 21–25.

thought to mean "set apart" or "separated ones."[4] According to the Torah tradition, Pharisees would understand holiness as principally meaning separation: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev 19:2b; cf. Lev 10:10–11; 11:44–45). In their view, the best way to keep covenant relationship (read right or upright relationship) with God was to keep holy by separating themselves from all that was unclean.

Jerome Neyrey, in an article about cultic purity, notes that there were two distinct strands of covenant tradition within Judaism: one understood covenant chiefly as holiness, and the other understood covenant chiefly as mercy. In Neyrey's words,

> With Moses, God acted in "holiness" to gather a special people as his own, which he separated from the nations and made holy by the Law. This tends to be an exclusive covenant. With Abraham and David, God acted in "mercy" to elect unlikely people to receive blessings and promises by grace; this covenant was perceived as being inclusive in nature (Gal 3:7–8; Rom 4:11–12, 17).[5]

The Pharisees and the Jesus movement are best seen as competing reform movements within Judaism, the former appealing to an understanding of the covenant as holiness and the latter appealing to an understanding of the covenant as mercy. Both have valid Torah basis. Therefore, it is best to view the interaction presented in Luke between Jesus and the Pharisees, and the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector, in light of this "sibling rivalry."[6]

The parable of the Prodigal Son (15:11–32) is helpful for understanding this sibling rivalry concept. The older son represents the Pharisees who have been doing the right things all along but become bitter because the father is now showing mercy to the younger, wayward son. The younger son represents the sinners whom Jesus welcomed. The father in the story attempts to include both siblings in the reunion banquet. In this way, the father continues to show deep concern for the elder son throughout the parable. We conclude that God's mercy is sufficient and overflowing, enough to embrace both covenant interpretations, both reform factions, and both siblings. Therefore, to vilify the Pharisees is to lose sight of the fundamental backdrop of the story. In times of exile or times of persecution, separation from other traditions and cultures would seem the most logical way to preserve right relationship with God. The Pharisees' holiness approach protected Israelite culture from assimilation into the dominant Greco-Roman culture. The Pharisees, from this point of view, would have reason to be "trusting in themselves that they were just" (Lk 18:9).

For Pharisees, holiness was achieved, in part, by rigorously keeping the law. When the Pharisee in our story claims, "I fast twice during the week; I tithe all things that I acquire" (18:12), he is claiming that he has not only kept the law but also has gone above and beyond the law's requirements. Some sources claim that fasting was required only on the Day of Atonement.[7] Later, it became customary to fast

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4. [BDAG] *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., ed. Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 1049.

5. Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts: 'They Turn the World Upside Down,'" in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. J. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 296.

6. James D. G. Dunn, "Pharisees, Sinners, and Jesus," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, Peder Borgen, and Richard Horsley (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 275.

7. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke Volume Two: 9:51–24:53* BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 1463.

on the Sabbath day in addition to the Day of Atonement. This Pharisee mentions fasting twice during the week. "This Pharisee was boasting, in other words, of an asceticism beyond the norm."[8]

As for tithing, it was customary to tithe on particular items. Deuteronomy 14: 22–29 instructs the faithful to tithe their grain, wine, and oil along with the firstlings of the herds and flocks. The Pharisee in this story is again claiming to go above and beyond the duty of the law by tithing a portion of everything he acquires.

According to his understanding of what it means to be faithful and upright according to the covenant tradition, this Pharisee is doing all of the right things in the narrative, in fact doing more than he needs to. Therefore, according to his tradition and understanding of scripture, he is certain that God sees him in the same way he views himself, namely, as "upright."

Although little is known about first-century Pharisees, one of the best informants was the apostle Paul. In Philippians (3:4b–6) and in Galatians (1:13–15), Paul describes what it meant for him to be a Pharisee. Despite the context of counting all of his previous accomplishments and sources of status as loss on account of Christ, it is still plain to see that Paul took great pride in his accomplishments as a Pharisee. Therefore, it becomes apparent why in the Pharisee's own estimation he was already considering himself upright or just in God's eyes, in the eyes of the people, and in his own eyes. He can make this claim because of his adherence to the holiness code and his supererogation of the law. All in all, this Pharisee is presented as an upstanding citizen, someone we would be proud to have as our neighbor.

Tax collectors as hated. Merely to mention tax collectors in ancient society would conjure up images of a much-hated group. Because the tax collector entered the homes of unclean people, touched unclean objects, and handled unclean money, he would be considered ceremonially unclean. Thus, according to the holiness tradition of the Pharisees, the tax collector fell well outside of the boundaries of holiness. "He belonged to a class of people who were hated and despised by all Jews. He was deprived of many rights, and ostracized. He could not be a judge; his witness was inadmissible in a court of law; and everything he touched became ritually unclean."[9] In addition, some tax collectors tended to exploit others (cf. Luke 3:13; 19:8).

Their profession landed them firmly on the margins of society for two main reasons. First, they were employees of the Roman imperial oppressors and were seen as colluding with them to oppress others. Second, the taxes they collected competed with the average person's ability to pay both Roman taxes and temple taxes, making holiness more difficult for the peasants to achieve. "A half-shekel tax was exacted by temple authorities for the upkeep of the temple . . . each year from every Jew twenty years of age and over in the land of Israel and beyond."[10] Inability to pay the annual temple tax would render one out of favor with God[11] and, on some level, unholy.

For tax collectors, there were no possibilities for changing status except to quit,

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8. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke: Sacra Pagina Series* vol. 3 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991): 272.

9. John Strelan, "The Pharisee Lurking: Reflections on Luke 18:9–14," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 20, no. 2–3 (Aug–Nov 1986): 118.

10. *Anchor Bible Dictionary* VI:340.

11. Web site of Catholic Education South Australia: *http://web.ceo.adl.catholic.edu.au/Faith/ds&s-units/6-Salvation-out.htm.*

which would not help their status at all. While some may have obtained wealth, they did so at further expense to their honor. In an honor-shame society, accumulation of wealth rendered them poor among the poor.[12]

The law prescribed what constituted restitution for tax collectors who had taken more than they ought. In order to make right with those who had been defrauded, the law required that the one defrauding another, upon realizing guilt, needed to repay the principal amount plus one-fifth (Lev 6:2–5). Tax collectors were like subcontractors, who agreed to pay the chief tax collector a given sum. Meanwhile, they lived on what they could collect in addition to what was required.[13] Therefore, defrauding people went hand in hand with being a tax collector. To justify themselves by repaying the principal plus one-fifth was impossible. This situation rendered all tax collectors in a hopeless predicament. "It was considered highly unlikely that such a person could and would ever repent and be acceptable to God."[14]

Indeed, for our tax collector, neither restitution nor repentance is easily observable. There is no mention of him paying anyone back anything, and yet he returns home "uprighted" or "aligned" with God. He does, however, refer to himself as "the sinner." The use of the definite article with "sinner" (τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ) makes the tax collector a sinner par excellence; he's the prototype of a sinner. Just as the Pharisee went above and beyond the works of the law, so the tax collector excels at his role of "sinner." Referring to himself this way reflects his hopeless situation.

From this summary, it is clear that the tax collector saw himself as everyone else saw him: a sinner. Indeed, both the Pharisee and the tax collector represent the typical ideological categories of the period:

The tax collector had no right to think of himself as just. Why then, does he go home justified?

"the 'righteous' represent those who do God's will, the 'sinners' are those who represent a whole complex of behaviour that is opposed to God and his ways."[15] The tax collector had no right to think of himself as just. In fact, in every possible way, he was far from just. Why then, does he go home justified? And why does the upstanding Pharisee go home unjustified?

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12. It is important to note that there was a difference between the tax collectors (τελῶναι), such as the one in our story, and the chief tax collectors (ἀρχιτελώνης), such as Zacchaeus. Supervisory officials, such as Zacchaeus, were the ones who "had the opportunity for personal gain." In other words, they had the opportunity to amass wealth. And wealth, in a limited-goods society, was a sign of robbery. These ordinary τελῶναι (toll collectors), such as the one in our story, may have had small opportunities to collect "more than the amount prescribed" (Lk 3:13). However, they would not have had the opportunity to amass wealth like Zacchaeus, an ἀρχιτελώνης.

13. Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3d ed. (Louisville: Westminster, 2001).

14. Thorwald Lorenzen, "The Radicality of Grace: 'The Pharisee and the Tax Collector' (Luke 18:9–14) as a Parable of Jesus," *Faith and Mission* 3 (Spring 1986): 69.

15. David A. Neale, *None but the Sinners: Religious Categories in the Gospel of Luke* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 95.

Evidence from Luke

Righteousness and repentance in Luke. "Uprightness" or "right relationship" is expressed often in Luke, along with its opposite. There are two points of view by which someone might seem upright: God's view and humanity's view.

Luke, the narrator and reliable witness in this story, communicates God's standards of judgment. Because Luke tells us that Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Simeon are righteous, we can assume that they are "upright" in God's eyes. The narrator also tells us that people, including tax collectors, were baptized by John (7:29), but the Pharisees and lawyers were not baptized by John (7:30). Receiving this baptism was a way to "justify God," and refusing it was tantamount to rejecting God's purpose for them. The people, including the tax collectors, were "aligned" with God's purposes or "uprighted" by God, while the Pharisees and lawyers were "misaligned." The tax collectors' and sinners' alignment with the ways of God becomes a key clue to Luke's view of justification.

The second view, uprightness in the eyes of humans, is portrayed as an ever-present danger. Being viewed as upright, or being an upstanding citizen in the view of other humans, was equivalent to practicing holiness as separation, seeking honor, having wealth, or maintaining power. While none of these qualities is wrong per se, uprightness in the eyes of humans often comes with the unfortunate corollary of neglecting the ways of God, in particular, neglecting mercy.

These two points of view are often characterized in Luke as the dichotomy between people who want to "justify" themselves (10:29; 16:15; 18:9) and "deny" Jesus (12:9) versus those who are willing to "deny" themselves (9:23) and "justify" God (7:29). The centurion's witness about Jesus, "Certainly this man was righteous" (23:47), is an example of one who "justified" God. Tax collectors are willing to be baptized by John (3:23, 7:30), demonstrate a willingness to leave everything to follow Jesus (5:28), and "acknowledge the justice of God" (NRSV) or "justify God" (7:29). As Johnson summarizes, tax collectors and sinners "have consistently been portrayed in the narrative as open to the prophet and conversion, thereby 'justifying God' (7:29; also 3:12; 5:27, 29, 30; 7:34; 15:1), whereas the Pharisees (with the lawyers/scribes) have just as consistently been portrayed as 'rejecting God's will for them' (7:30) by 'justifying themselves.'"[16]

A question is raised, however, as to whether this prayer of the tax collector is actual repentance or whether true repentance might require more, as in the case of Zacchaeus who demonstrated repentance by his willingness to pay back four times any amount he defrauded anyone. Because repentance is such a key theme in Luke-Acts, it is important to carefully explore how repentance and justification intersect in Luke's narrative.

John the Baptist defines what it means to repent: bear fruit and do not rely on blood kinship (3:8), share if you have an abundance of clothing or food (3:10), collect no more than prescribed (3:13), and refrain from extortion (3:14). Each of these directives is addressed to people who already have honor, wealth, or status. Jesus claims that he has come to call sinners to repentance (5:32), that there will be joy over even one sinner who repents (15:7, 10), and that repentance leads to life (11:32; 24:47) and lack of repentance leads to death (10:13; 13:3, 5; 16:30). Repentance is typically viewed as a turning away from sinful ways and back toward God. Zacchaeus is an

16. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 271.

example of one who takes just such an action.

However, there is another group of people within Luke who do not repent in the classic sense of the word. This group consists of those who, because of their position on the margins and their total lack of wealth, status, power, or honor, are completely dependent upon the mercy of others, including God. They lack the resources to repent, when restitution is part of the deal. They do not have room to turn back toward God when society has backed them into a corner. They can only throw themselves on God's mercy over their hopeless predicament. The tax collector is one such character. He demonstrates two gestures of import: he would not raise his eyes, and he was beating his breast. Before the tax collector utters a word, the implied reader would have known that he was deeply anguished about his hopeless situation before God.

Two other examples of characters fitting this description—one "real" and one fictional—are the woman who loved much (7:36–50) and Lazarus (16:19–31). Neither of these characters confesses any wrongdoing, vows to refrain from any further wrongdoing, or turns back to God in any obvious way. The woman throws herself at the feet of Jesus, demonstrating great love toward him. Jesus lifts her—uprights her—both literally and figuratively. Similarly, Lazarus throws himself on the mercy of the rich man and is ignored, but God uprights him.

God's vindication of those in such a hopeless predicament is also apparent in the Beatitudes in Luke. When Jesus blesses the people, he does so without conditions, including repentance. "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh" (6:20–21). These people, who are sinned against and have not oppressed, exploited, or marginalized others, have accepted the ways of God and have accepted Jesus. For that, and for the marginal and oppressed position they occupy, they are already aligned with the ways of God. They are justified.

Therefore, repentance for Luke means two different things for two different groups. For those with power, wealth, and status, repentance means risking all of what they are and what they have in order to justify God's ways, which includes showing mercy to those at the margins. In some cases, it means offering restitution for the wrongs committed. However, for those without power, wealth, or status—for those who have been sinned against, oppressed, and marginalized—classic repentance is not necessary. Only the simple acknowledgment of God's ways is required.

> Uprightness in the eyes of humans often comes with the unfortunate corollary of neglecting the ways of God.

In the same way, justification is two-tiered in Luke. For those at the center, much is required, precisely because God has already given them much. But for those at the periphery, justification happens simply because they are marginalized and because of their willingness to "acknowledge the justice of God" or "justify God" (7:29).

Proximity to the center. Proximity to the temple might be seen as a symbolic representation of social location. In other words, those nearer the temple are historically viewed as more upright, while those at the periphery are viewed as more sinful. In this particular story, the Pharisee proves his character by how and where he postures himself. The Pharisee was "standing by himself." However, the nuance of the "standing" participle used here (σταθεὶς) indicates standing in the presence of others to make a speech.[17] Incidentally, this exact verb form is used in Luke only three times: here (18:11), concerning Jesus (18:40), and concerning Zacchaeus (19:8)—all three of them public stances for public announcement. It is clear from the word usage that he speaks in such a way that others can overhear him.

Just like the Pharisee, the tax collector's actions tell the needed information about his character. Whereas the Pharisee was standing close and within earshot of others, the tax collector is standing "far off." The "standing" participle used here (ἑστὼς) in relation to the tax collector has the sense of simply being,[18] unlike the Pharisee's posture for public announcement. Luke also tells us that he was standing far off (μακρόθεν). From the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector, it is apparent that the Pharisee was standing closer to the center of the temple than the tax collector was. One theory for this placement of these two characters is that Jesus was effectively redrawing the lines of the temple map.[19]

Under the purity holiness tradition, those who were closest to the center of the city, or the temple (which would be centrally located within the city), were more protected and were closer to the righteousness and justice of God. The temple functioned as "the chief symbol of Israel's symbolic universe."[20] The temple is mentioned frequently in the narrative through chapter 4 (Jesus' temptation) and then is not mentioned again until this verse, which immediately precedes Jesus' reentry into Jerusalem. All of the intervening verses describe events that occur at a distance from the temple and from Jerusalem.

In these intervening verses that take place on the margins of society, whenever Jesus comes near or others come near him, compassion, mercy, and healing come near. For instance, when Jesus was coming near Nain, he had compassion on a widow and raised her only son (7:11–17). Likewise, in the parable of the good Samaritan, when the Samaritan came near to the beaten man, he had mercy on him. This story is set as the man is going down from Jerusalem (note: away from the temple, not toward it) when he is ignored by the priest and the Levite, but shown compassion from the Samaritan. Betty Tan argues that two parables, the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector and the good Samaritan, demonstrate Luke's distaste for the temple. Citing Shillington, she argues the ineffectiveness of the temple for giving life and forgiveness.[21] One might add that the model of temple as central was failing precisely because it precluded any demonstration of mercy to those on the periphery.[22]

Taken with this backdrop in mind, the physical position of our tax collector is key. He is standing far off during his prayer.

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17. BDAG, 482.
18. BDAG, 482.
19. Neyrey, "The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts," 278.
20. Ibid.
21. Betty O. S. Tan, "The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector in Luke 18:9–14: A Study on the Practice of Prayer," *Asia Journal of Theology* 14:2 (Oct. 2000), 290.
22. Not to mention that by the time Luke wrote this account, the temple was gone.

And in life, he is positioned as an outcast on the outskirts of society. In light of what we have learned about the mercy of God shown elsewhere in Luke, part of what justifies, or "uprights," this tax collector is his position in society. Effectively, Jesus "rearranged the lines of the map so that those formerly excluded from the map were included and those on the outer circles of the map were now closer to the center."[23] One may even say that proximity to Jesus, who situated himself on the margins, became for Luke the new symbolic center of God's mercy—the mercy seat, as it were—rather than the temple.

Humility. It is necessary to consider humility in light of the prayers of both the tax collector and the Pharisee, together with the maxim that ends this story: "all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted" (18:14; cf. 14:11). Humility is more than just an attitude about oneself or the absence of boasting. Humility also has very concrete dimensions. I argue that this story, as well as much of Luke, is as much about social location as about any spiritual or psychological attitude.

Examining other places where Luke uses the "humility" word group is helpful. In Luke, there are two parables ending with the same maxim: the Pharisees taking the places of honor at the banquet (14:7–11) and the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9–11). The former story is clearly about status. Being humble has everything to do with standing up and taking a lower seat, which represents a lower social position. In addition, the word is used twice in Mary's song: "he has looked with favor on the lowliness (ταπείνωσιν) of his servant" (1:48) and "he has lifted up the lowly (ταπεινούς)" (1:52). In both of these cases, the word is used in terms of social location, representing those at the periphery of society.

This story, as well as much of Luke, is as much about social location as about any spiritual or psychological attitude.

Many commentators attribute the tax collector's return to his home "justified" to his humble and penitent attitude.[24] However, it is no accident that the story of the banquet and this story are linked by the same maxim, verbatim. In both stories, honor and status are intimately linked both to attitude toward the lowly and to social positioning in relation to the lowly. Taking the low seat at the banquet means dislodging oneself from the center enough to be physically situated close enough to show

23. Neyrey, "The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts," 298.

24. See L. Thomas Strong III, "The Importunate Widow and the Pharisee and Publican," *The Theological Educator* (Fall 1997), 90; Tan, "The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector," 289; Walter R. Liefeld, "Parables on Prayer (Luke 11:5–13; 18: 1–14)," in *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 240–62; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:1183–84; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 681; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke Volume Two: 9:51–24:53* BECNT, 1465; John O. York, *The Last Shall Be First: The Rhetoric of Reversal in Luke* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 74, 110, and so on.

mercy to those at the periphery, to those such as a tax collector. The same can be said of the Pharisee who takes his place near the center of the temple and, instead of being humble, distances himself further from the tax collector with his prayer.

Throughout Luke, moral and ethical behaviors (showing mercy, loving enemies, being humble) are intimately connected to one's status. The higher one's status, the more obligations one is under to demonstrate moral and ethical behavior. "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded" (12:48).

Reviewing the story with all of the above in mind, it is possible to see that the Pharisee who was trusting that he was just by his many upright works was also "despising" the rest, thereby demonstrating behavior that is anti-moral and anti-ethical. The tax collector, among other "unjust" ones, was the object of the Pharisee's scorn this particular day. Because he had been scorned, by this Pharisee or by others in society, he calls upon God to act mercifully toward him by removing the impeding distance.

Whereas the Pharisees took seriously the command of Lev 11:45, where "Be holy as I am holy" could be translated "Be separate as I am separate," Jesus here reconfigures the whole notion. Jesus' mandate "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (6:36) recasts two dimensions of Lev 11:45: mercy as covenant holiness and mercy as proximity instead of separateness. Luke is making the assertion that one cannot be merciful if one is also distant; one cannot show mercy at the margins if one is stuck in the center of power, wealth, status, and honor.

To read the tax collector's side of the maxim, "all who humble themselves will be exalted," as a purely psychological or inward turn is to miss the humble (and marginal) position the tax collector occupied. This maxim, indeed the whole story, must be read in terms of social location. The tax collector, while demonstrating a humble attitude, was already occupying a marginal position. He—like Lazarus, the woman who showed great love, and others—was "uprighted" by God because the trappings of humanity and its commitment to status and distance did not allow mercy or proximity to ones such as these.

Cross-examination

Pharisees cross-examined. Clearly, this Pharisee is guilty of despising others. Luke the narrator helps us to discover to whom the parable is directed: to "ones who have confidence in themselves that they are just and who despise the rest" (18:9). To grasp fully the extent of the contempt and disregard being depicted here, it is important to note that Luke uses the term "despising" (ἐξουθενοῦντας) in only one other place: the trial of Jesus. Luke narrates, "Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt (ἐξουθενήσα) and mocked him" (23:11). Although there may have been others in Jesus' audience besides Pharisees fitting this description—even the disciples—the Pharisee in this story reveals himself to be despising others. In the story he thanks God that he is essentially better than the rest.

This Pharisee's prayer has been compared to other prayers in the Torah and in early Rabbinic literature. Frederick Holmgren compares the Pharisee's prayer to one in Deut 26:1–5 that would have been used in a liturgical setting. Here, it would be an appropriate sign to "stand up and affirm a partnership with God that is expressed in a human lifestyle and in specific deeds."[25] Betty Tan and others liken this prayer to an

exaggeration of a similar prayer in Rabbinic literature,[26] a prayer that emphasizes, acknowledges, and thanks God for the good fortune of the pray-er. In both cases, whichever scenario Luke may have been calling to mind, the exaggeration of the prayer is the point. Rather than thanking God for the blessings God has bestowed, prayer can quickly turn into self-satisfaction, self-justification, or self-righteousness. The Pharisee in this story has made himself the center of his prayer, a prayer in which God should rightfully be the center.

It is also clear that he has moved into his rightful position in the temple, which would presumably be very near the center. (At a minimum, we ascertain from the use of "afar" in reference to the tax collector, the Pharisee would be much nearer to the center than the tax collector.) The Pharisee's physical placement nearer to the center and his physical posturing, then, both represent his own self-assessment of inclusion in the holy places of society and his distance from the sinners, like the tax collector.

Third, the cross-examination reveals that the Pharisee is the personal subject of most of his own prayer. There is much I-language in the prayer, with God functioning only as the object.[27] Moreover, the Pharisee asks nothing of God,[28] perhaps because in his own mind he needs nothing from God.

Finally, elsewhere Luke depicts the Pharisees negatively. By association, this Pharisee represents other Pharisees, and vice versa. By examining how Luke treats the Pharisees, it is possible to see the reasons why Jesus conflicts with them. Pharisees are portrayed as ones who refuse John's baptism and reject God's purpose for them (7:30). They are described as "full of greed and wickedness" (11:39), hypocritical (12:1), and "lovers of money" (16:14). In addition, they prove themselves highly concerned with matters of the law, including food laws (e.g., 5:33, 6:2, 11:38, 15:2) and Sabbath laws (e.g., 6:2, 13:10–16, 14:3–6), at the expense of demonstrating mercy to the lowly among them. Perhaps most pertinent to our discussion, Jesus accuses the Pharisees of justifying themselves in the eyes of other humans (16:15). Luke's portrayal of Pharisees is that they tended to align themselves more with worldly status and honor than with God's ways.

Jesus also sharply condemns a group of Pharisees for exactly what our Pharisee does in this parable: "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others" (11:42). By this remark alone, it is obvious that Jesus does not have anything against people who are law-abiding and covenantally faithful. However, he does have a problem with ritual observance when it comes at the expense of the duty to show mercy to others. Similarly, in the very next verse (11:43), Jesus condemns the Pharisees for what they will wind up doing in 14:7–11: "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love to have the seat of honor in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces." This proves to be important, because both stories end with the same maxim: "All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted"

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25. Frederick C. Holmgren. "The Pharisee and the Tax Collector: Luke 18:9–14 and Deuteronomy 26:1–15," *Interpretation* 48 (July 1994): 258.

26. Tan, "The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector," 291.

27. Holmgren, 254.

28. Alan Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," in the *New Interpreter's Bible* 9 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995): 342.

For Luke, justification involves two different things for two different groups of people.

(14:11; 18:14). The "woes" against the Pharisees are expanded and explained in these two stories of Jesus.

From a more careful assessment of the Pharisee in this story, it is unmistakable that he was considering himself upright, or just, and obvious why he might even be "justified" in thinking this way. However, it is also clear that the Pharisee and other leaders are using "religion as a wedge between themselves and those who need their help."[29] In this respect, by "despising the rest" the Pharisee is failing to show the required mercy to his fellow human beings. Therefore, while he thinks he has a firm and central place to stand before God, the story illustrates that he does not. His central position in society affords him more options to demonstrate mercy to others than those in more marginal positions are offered. This Pharisee misuses those options to set himself further apart from the rest.

Tax collectors cross-examined. This tax collector does not volunteer to give up any wealth that he may have or to offer restitution to those he may have defrauded. While there is no restitution, there is recognition of distance, both from God and from other people. There is also recognition of the need for mercy, both from God and from other people. Ultimately this means that the tax collector, like the tax collectors who received the baptism of John (7:29), acknowledges and aligns himself with God's ways. He recognizes his own distanced position from God, and he recognizes that it is only God who can bridge the chasm between them because he is in a hopeless bind. His offering of the sacrifice of prayer in the temple is further evidence that this tax collector "acknowledges the justice of God" (7:29).

The tax collector's prayer is recognition that he has no basis on which to stand before God. He does not cite anything good that he may have done. In his prayer, God is the sole subject. He, by contrast, is the "sinner," the object of the mercy hoped-for from God. The word used here by the tax collector, ἱλάσκομαι (often translated, "be merciful"), is not the usual word used by others of Luke's characters when asking for mercy. While still within the semantic domain of mercy,[30] it may be more specific to translate ἱλάσθητί μοι as "atone for me" or "be inclined toward me." A proper understanding of this word goes a long way in discovering what the tax collector was really asking: he was not able to cover for his own restitution, so he asked God to atone for him—and/or he wished that God would help to remove the distance that separated them.

When Jesus says in 5:32, "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance," it is clear from Jesus' behavior and his company that those who consider themselves "sinners" are inclined to receive his message, while those who consider themselves "righteous" and in no need

29. David Rhoads, *The Challenge of Diversity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 107.

30. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2d ed., ed. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 88.75.

of anything are inclined to reject his message. Rhetorically in this story, Luke is leading us to identify with the sinners, and with this hated tax collector, in hopes that we too will be inclined to make a choice to align ourselves with God by humbling ourselves in a social way, by physically moving from our own "centers" of power and privilege toward the margins of society in order to demonstrate God's mercy.

The verdict: Reversal of expectations

By this point in the story Luke has undone many of the old boundaries through reversals. In this story, roles are reversed. But, more important, mercy replaces holiness and separation as the true test of alignment with the ways of God. The narrative function of this episode advances Luke's overall plot: the old categories are being shuffled and new categories are being marked. Those calling themselves just no longer look so just. Those being called sinners are becoming "upright." The disciples occasionally take on traits ascribed to Pharisees (9:46–48; 18:15–17; 22:24–27), while a member of the council (23:50) starts to act like a disciple! Just when you think you know where and how you fit, you are challenged to reconsider Jesus' calling. Those who deny themselves justify God, but those who justify themselves deny God.

For Luke, justification involves two different things for two different groups of people. For those with power, wealth, or status, justification involves repentance, or a turning back to God's ways of mercy (not separation). However, for those without power, wealth, or status—in other words, those who are completely marginalized—justification is part of God's mercy being shown to them because humans are not doing it. For this group, acknowledging or accepting God is enough. Humility, too, means different things for the two groups: for those who already have power, wealth, or status, humility means giving some (or, arguably, all) of it up to move closer to those on the margins. However, for those who do not have power, wealth, or status, humility is their current state. "When the powerful love God first, they are humble and use their power in mercy to serve others (22:24–27). They act to justify God's ways rather than their own."[31]

In painting these dramatic pictures of reversal, Luke is effectively drawing us a new picture of what society could be: a place where those with power voluntarily give some up so that others might have more, a place where those with money and other resources voluntarily give some up so that others might have enough to live. To those at the margins, it is a word of hope. However, this utopian vision is not a rosy vision for everyone. "To the religious community which has defined itself in ways that exclude many, it is a challenge to change from rejection to acceptance."[32]

While the blessings and woes of Luke are interpreted concretely (as opposed to Matthew's more spiritual reading), justification, exaltation, and humility are often read as highly psychologized terms, meaning the inward attitude of the heart toward God. I argue that these, too, are very concrete terms in Luke and have everything to do with social location. In a very real sense, then, the place from which you pray (the center or the margins) has everything to do with whether and how God justifies you.

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31. Rhoads, *The Challenge of Diversity*, 110.

32. Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation. Volume One: The Gospel According to Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 125.

The Road to Emmaus: Changing Expectations
A Narrative-Critical Study

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Luke 24:13–35[1]

Now on the same day, two of Jesus' disciples were going to the village of Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about the things that had taken place.

While they were talking, Jesus himself came near and started walking along beside them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. Jesus asked them, "What are you talking about as you walk along?" They stood still, looking crestfallen.

Then one of them named Cleopas answered him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening these days?"

He asked, "What things?"

They answered, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene. He was considered by God and all the people to be a powerful prophet in all that he did and said. And our chief priests and leaders had him condemned to death and crucified. But we were hoping that he was the one who would liberate Israel.

"Besides all this, it's the third day now since all these things took place. Moreover, some of our women astounded us; they went to the tomb early this morning, but they didn't find his body. They came back and told us that they had seen a vision of angels; the angels said that that he is alive. Then some of our men went to the tomb and they found it just as the women had said, but they didn't see him."

Jesus said to them, "How foolish you are and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets said! Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

Then he explained everything written about himself in the Writings, beginning with Moses and all the prophets.

As they approached the village where they were going, Jesus acted as if he would continue on. But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us; the day is almost over and it is getting dark." So he went in to stay with them.

When he sat down at the table to eat, he took some bread and said a blessing; then he broke it and gave it to them. Just then, their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but Jesus vanished from their sight.

They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road as he was opening the Writings to us?"

They got up at once and returned to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven apostles and their companions all together. They were saying, "The Lord has truly risen, and he has appeared to Simon!"

The two then explained to them what had happened on the road and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

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1. The Emmaus episode is presented without verse number. Following David Rhoads's example, "the paragraph divisions mark a shift in scene, a change of speaker, or the end of a conflict" (*Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 2d ed. [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999], 8).

In this essay I examine Luke 24:13–35 from a narrative-critical approach.[2] The Emmaus episode reveals the purpose of God's work in Jesus: a plan to liberate Israel.[3] Through the character of Cleopas, the reader hears the disciples' view of Jesus' role in God's plan. Through the character of the stranger (Jesus), the reader hears God's view of Jesus' role. By means of the dialogue between Cleopas and the stranger, the reader is given an overview of the main elements of the entire narrative of Luke. When the disciples have understood the proper role of the Messiah, they recognize the one who serves them a meal as the risen Jesus. The proper role of the Messiah in liberating Israel is not to demonstrate superior power by conquering Israel's enemies but to serve by breaking bread for them. Luke presents two critical notions of Jesus the Messiah: the role of one who must suffer, and the role of a servant, as revealed in the sharing of a meal.

Setting: time and place

A story is always recounted within a specific time frame and location. The Emmaus episode is linked with the previous episodes that share the same time frame by the use of the phrase "on the same day," the day in which the empty tomb is discovered. In fact, all the events of Luke 24 occur on one day. The day starts early in the morning with the women going to the tomb. Later, after the women have astounded the others by relating the empty tomb and a vision of angels, the men verify the empty tomb. Sometime that same day the two disciples start the journey to Emmaus.

A prevalent setting throughout Luke is the journey. Jesus teaches and proclaims his message as he travels to Jerusalem (9:51–19:44). The setting of a journey also depicts the journey of faith of the disciples.[4] There is a progression of learning from the day the disciples are called to when they are sent out in mission (24:47). This progression is depicted through the activity of walking on a road.

For Luke, Jerusalem is the primary geographic setting for the story. Beginning with 9:51 ("he set his face to go to Jerusalem"), we discover that almost two-thirds of Luke's Gospel is spent with Jesus on his way to Jerusalem or staying in Jerusalem. Although we find our travelers in the Emmaus episode walking away from Jerusalem toward Emmaus, we are told that the village is nearby—about seven miles away, within the environs of Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem is central to the narrator's story. Jesus laments over the city, and yet he navigates throughout Luke's account the story with the goal of arriving in Jerusalem. As Jesus himself states, "I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem" (13:33). Jesus' disciples also show the centrality of Jerusalem. After Jesus' crucifixion, they remain in Jerusalem. This is where Cleopas and his unnamed companion find them after they have encountered Jesus. After the Emmaus episode, Jesus instructs all the disciples to remain in Jerusalem to await the Holy Spirit. Luke's sequel in Acts begins with the disciples still in Jerusalem.

Meals are also often the setting of encounter between Jesus and those who are in relationship with him. At times they are scenes of confrontation (with Pharisees),

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2. For an introduction to this method, see Mark Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), and Rhoads, *Mark as Story*.

3. Israel is to be understood as a people and nation chosen by God.

4. Robert J. Karris, *Luke: Artist and Theologian—Luke's Passion Account as Literature* (New York: Paulist, 1985).

of experiencing Jesus' power (healing, compassion, or forgiveness), or of solidarity and revealing who Jesus is (Passover, Emmaus). Meals connote hospitality, and hospitality is an important value in Luke's Gospel. Luke connects meals and God's reign with revelation of Jesus as Messiah in that the reign is revealed through meals (cf. Peter and his confession after the feeding of the 5,000).[5] The meal setting at Emmaus becomes instrumental in both the revelation and discovery of the true identity of the stranger.

Literary devices that illuminate the episode

Three stylistic devices are important in the understanding of the Emmaus episode: irony, pathos, and prophetic fulfillment. Dramatic irony occurs when there is a discrepancy between what a character thinks to be the case and what the real situation is, or between what a character expects to happen and what actually happens.[6] As the two disciples walk along the road, they encounter a stranger. Although the identity of this stranger remains a mystery to the disciples throughout most of this episode, the narrator takes the readers aside to let them know clearly and emphatically that this stranger is Jesus himself. Such a gesture by the narrator confirms what the readers have experienced elsewhere when they are given special insight.

In this episode, such a gesture allows the readers to appreciate the irony of the situation as Cleopas unwittingly tells the story of Jesus to Jesus himself. Cleopas calls the stranger a visitor to Jerusalem, even though a week earlier Jesus had entered Jerusalem as a hero (19:37). The readers want Cleopas and the other disciple to recognize that Jesus is no longer dead, but they do not. Their eyes are kept from recognizing him. Instead of joy at seeing the resurrected Jesus, they stand there looking crestfallen.

Another example of Luke's use of irony is connected to the expected hope of liberation. In the birth narratives, the promise of imminent liberation is made through trustworthy spokespersons (Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, Anna). However, the Lukan reader has experienced the reality of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 C.E. by the Roman forces. Ultimately, the narrator uses irony in the main plot of the story: God sends Jesus the prophet-Messiah to liberate God's people, Israel. Despite Israel's rejection of God's messenger, God ironically incorporates this rejection into God's overall purpose.[7]

A second stylistic device of the Lukan narrator is pathos. Pathos is an artistic attempt to evoke compassion in the reader or to make the reader become emotionally involved with the characters and events in a story. The narrator had created the expectation that the Messiah would liberate Israel from her oppressors. But now, as Cleopas and his companion halt on the road, the narrator draws attention to their faces, crestfallen. They are pitiable travelers who sadly leave Jerusalem without their hopes being fulfilled. The narrator has captured the reader's emotions.

A third stylistic device is the narrator's use of prophecies and their fulfillments. Early on in the story words from God's spokespersons describe what is intended to take place later in the story. When such prophecies are fulfilled the reader senses a certain connection and cohesiveness with

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5. Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation,* Vol. 1 (Philadelphia and Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986), 218–19.

6. Rhoads, *Mark as Story,* 60.

7. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity,* 9.

the story. However, when such prophecies are not immediately fulfilled—in fact, when it seems the very opposite of the prophecy is happening—a creative tension occurs that, coupled with pathos, creates tragedy. Seemingly, the prophecies of liberation that Cleopas alludes to are unfulfilled. However, with the explanations of the stranger, Cleopas discovers that it is not a case of unfulfilled prophecy. Rather, Cleopas has not understood the full import of all the scriptural prophecies. The prophecies concerning the Messiah are indeed fulfilled in the suffering of Jesus.

Introduction of characters and review of Lukan themes

The episode opens with the introduction of two unknown characters who, by context, are understood to be followers of Jesus. The anonymity at first of these characters suggests that their identities are not as important as whom they represent and what they say. Later the narrator does name one of these persons as Cleopas. However, given our temporal distance from the story we can only venture guesses[8] as to any importance in naming this one disciple. It does seem, however, that the narrator gives us the name of this character to bring credibility to the story with the possibility that the reader might know Cleopas.

In any case, Cleopas in the episode becomes a mouthpiece of the narrator to list many of the salient points of the story. More specifically, he is the character in the story who represents all the disciples who followed Jesus throughout Galilee and his purposeful journey to Jerusalem. He relates to the stranger how he (and the disciples) has understood Jesus' life and death in relation to their hopes of liberation. Cleopas' (mis)understandings are theirs.

Almost every utterance of Cleopas leads the reader to recall earlier episodes:

In this compact exchange between Cleopas and Jesus we have the essentials of the story of Luke.

Jesus the Nazarene, prophet, powerful in deeds and words, considered by God and all the people, our chief priests and leaders condemned and crucified him, hope of the liberation of Israel, third day, women, angels. The parade of earlier episodes continues, but now through the words of the stranger, Jesus: slow of heart to believe, Messiah, suffer, glory, Moses and the prophets.[9] In this compact exchange between Cleopas and Jesus we have the essentials of the story of Luke. And within this list, we have the main point of the story: God's plan to liberate Israel by a Messiah who suffers and serves.

Cleopas' view

Jesus is a powerful rejected prophet. In the Lukan story, the town of Nazareth is clearly the starting point for Jesus' public ministry; it is also where the boy Jesus grew up and became known to the community. It

8. One finds an apparent alternative spelling to the name Cleopas in John 19:25 where the person is the husband of Mary, a witness to the crucifixion.

9. See Robert Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 94, for a discussion of the use of "repetition of word-motifs" and its purposes in narratives.

is in Nazareth (4:16–30) where Jesus, from the position of a prophet (4:24), proclaims his message by the words of Isaiah. Calling Jesus a prophet does several things: (1) ties Jesus to the scriptural images of Elijah and Moses as workers of great deeds; (2) historically reminds people what happened with most of the prophets —they were rejected and killed by people; (3) the central location where this rejection/death takes place is Jerusalem; (4) in Jesus' predictions of his coming death, it always comes immediately after the people/disciples are marveling at his powerful deeds as a prophet/Messiah/Son of Man.[10] Jesus as a prophet is a "type personage" in that he exhibits many things that are similar to the prophets of the Jewish Scriptures, in particular Moses (through miracles and his authoritative teaching) and Elijah (through the preaching of repentance and the proclamation of the judgment of God).[11] The narrator is continuously evoking the past actions of Moses and Elijah in relation to Jesus throughout the story. Such comparison becomes explicit in Jesus' transfiguration (9:28–36), where Moses and Elijah appear in order to talk with Jesus. Jesus, Moses, and Elijah all experienced rejection as prophets as they presented God's purposes to God's people.

After beginning in his hometown, Jesus goes throughout Galilee and the surrounding regions and eventually makes his way toward Jerusalem. During this time, Jesus is depicted by himself (13:33) and by the people (7:16; 9:19) as a prophet. Throughout this journey, the reader witnesses the healings, exorcising of demons, raising of the dead, power over nature, and a miraculous feeding. In the same way, the reader hears numerous parables along with both public and private teachings of Jesus that relate what God's Rule is like. All of this—the miracles and the message—are witnessed not only within the story by the people Jesus encounters but also from outside the story by the reader.

Moreover, the invisible character of God is present in these words and deeds. God's voice of approval of Jesus is heard both at his baptism (3:22) and during the transfiguration (9:35). All of this is encapsulated when Cleopas refers to "the Nazarene, considered by God and all the people to be a powerful prophet in all he did and said." By Jesus' fulfillment of his role as the anointed prophet (4:18), the expectation grows that indeed Jesus is more than this—he is the one to liberate Israel from her oppressors.

Throughout Jesus' demonstration of his mighty deeds and words, the narrator builds tension into the story as Jesus enters into conflict again and again with the chief priests and leaders. Such conflict is foreshadowed in Simeon's stating that Jesus will be "a sign that will be opposed" (2:34). Starting with Jesus' teaching in Nazareth and continuing on through the numerous conflicts of healing on the Sabbath and the provocative scenes of Jesus' contact with "impure" people, the reader witnesses the clashes Jesus experiences. Such conflict is ultimately between God's purposes (lived out through Jesus) and those who reject God's purposes. The narrator states this clearly in 7:30: "The Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves." This conflict ultimately results in Jesus' being arrested and delivered by the chief priests and leaders to be condemned

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10. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity.*

11. Mark L Strauss, "The David Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* Supplement Series 10 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 229.

and crucified. The reader sees the battle lines drawn between Jesus the prophet and the leaders of Israel.

After the crucifixion of Jesus, the disciples are devastated. Was their hope ill-founded? This is one source of Cleopas' crestfallen look. He (as representative of all the disciples) had been convinced that Jesus' actions and words had demonstrated that he was not just one more prophet but was the mighty prophet promised to redeem Israel.

Cleopas' hope in Jesus as the one to liberate Israel. After relating recent events to the stranger, Cleopas turns to his main thrust: the hope of the liberation of Israel. Throughout the story the reader is led to this hope of liberation. This is the theme that came with the announcement of Jesus' birth, followed by Mary's song (1:54). It was strengthened by the prophecies of Zechariah ("[God] has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them," 1:68), Simeon ("[Simeon was] looking forward to the consolation of Israel," 2:25), and Anna ("all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem," 2:38). Jesus himself further strengthens such a hope by indicating the privileged position the disciples have to "see and hear" what they were experiencing (10:23–24). Later Jesus reveals what they are seeing and hearing when he talks of the Son of Man's return and redemption being near (21:28).

In the Emmaus episode there is no mention of the Gentiles. Given that the object of redemption is Israel, how are we to understand Luke's message for non-Jews? There are windows in Luke from which the reader can see a preview of the book of Acts. In 2:32 we hear of "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." In 24:47 Jesus says "that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." To view the Gospel of Luke and ignore Acts is to risk thinking that God's plan is concerned only with the people of Israel. Yet, through Simeon's prophecy and Jesus' commission we anticipate Jesus' message and ministry expanding to the Gentile world—but this time, through Jesus' disciples.

Throughout the story the reader is led to the hope of Israel's liberation.

Returning to Cleopas' hope of liberation, the reader begins to wonder whether the sadness that the stranger recognizes in Cleopas is due to the death of a friend and leader, Jesus. Or is the sadness due to an unfulfilled expectation of the liberation of Israel? Perhaps both. The hope of Israel is that this Messiah will liberate Israel.

We must differentiate the disciples' understanding of "liberate" from what Jesus draws out of the Jewish Scriptures. For the disciples, "to be liberated" meant to be released from the oppressive grasp of the Roman government. In discussing the need for repentance, Jesus alludes to certain Galileans being killed by Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea (13:1). There are certain references to "Gentiles" as representative of the Roman occupying forces in Luke. This occurs in the later part of Luke's story, starting with a foreshadowing of those who will mistreat Jesus (18:32). The Gentiles are connected with the destruction of Jerusalem (21:24). The kings of the Gentiles are referred to in a counterexample of servant-

hood (22:25). Ultimately, Israel's hope of liberation is a hope of freedom from Roman domination.

Nevertheless, almost all references to Pilate after the arrest of Jesus show him as wanting to release Jesus, finding no fault with him. However, the narrator does let the reader know an interesting fact: after Pilate found out Jesus was from Galilee, he sent him to Herod, the Roman-appointed ruler of Galilee. Afterward, Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate: "That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies" (23:12). Throughout Luke's story of Jesus' activity in Galilee, the enemy of God's work is not directly the Roman government but the Jewish (puppet) ruler, Herod.

Not only was Herod the enemy of Jesus, but also it seems that the people perceived him in this way. The narrator relates the reason why John the Baptist rebuked him: "because of all the evil things that Herod had done" (3:19). Is Herod the only source of antagonism for Jesus and the people? No. It is clear throughout the story that not only are the chief priests plotting to kill Jesus, but the Pharisees disapprove of Jesus also and are oppressing the people of Israel. These Pharisees, we are told, are "lovers of money" (16:14), and they "neglect justice and the love of God" (11:42). In so doing, they are "rejecting God's purposes" (7:30). Within Luke's Gospel the hope of liberation is related to Israel's oppression from its very own leaders as well as the occupying government of Rome.

The Messiah is expected to wipe away the oppressive forces by strength and supremacy. Such expectation can be seen in the birth prophecies (1:32–33, 68–69, 71, 73–73). Jesus' authoritative proclamation and powerful deeds seem to confirm the people's hopes. Jesus must be the Messiah. Yet, for the people and the disciples, there is no connection at all between the Messiah and suffering. This second, misunderstood aspect of the Messiah's role brings disillusionment for Jesus' disciples.

The disciples' hope of liberation is misguided in two ways: they do not understand that the Messiah "must" suffer, and they do not understand that the redemption will not happen immediately. The disciples will suffer for a period just as the Messiah did. They have premature expectations of the eschatological fulfillment because they do not take into consideration Jesus' rejection.[12] The time for the liberation of Israel was not during Jesus' earthly ministry. True, such liberation was prophesied, and the reader has expectations for this deliverance to be accomplished. Yet, according to Jesus' own words, this deliverance will follow the Son of Man's return in glory: "Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (21:28; see also 9:26). This issue of timing is also implicit in the sad expression of deflated hope related by Cleopas, "We were hoping that he was the one to liberate Israel [*now!*]." The immediate redemption of Israel is in the forefront of the disciples' minds.[13] Such an understanding of timing is somewhat surprising for the reader, given the prophecies of Jesus where he repeats how the "Son of Man" will return to the earth (9:26, 17:24, 30, 18:8, 21:27–28).

Doubts of resurrection. Cleopas quickly relates three final verbal threads to the story: third day, women, and angels. It is

12. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity,* 9.

13. If one looks beyond Luke to its sequel, Acts of the Apostles, one sees that this issue of timing of Israel's redemption continues in Acts 1:6, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?"

difficult to know what Cleopas meant by mentioning the third day. Could it be that he knew some of Jesus' earlier words about rising on the third day? Perhaps, but if these two disciples did think he would be raised on the third day, what were they doing going sadly away from Jerusalem? It seems that the mention of this time element has more to do with the cultural understanding of death, according to which the spirit of a dead person remained near the body for three days. By the third day it would be clear that no resurrection miracle could occur. The person would be considered fully dead.

As for the mention of the women, it is clear that Cleopas and the eleven apostles do not give the women much credit, even though one can see that Jesus and women had good rapport.[14] When it comes to the male disciples, they did not even believe the women's story of an empty tomb, much less that of a vision of angels.

Throughout Luke, angels are recognized as being with God in heaven or, at special times, sent by God to earth. Three such envoys announce the births of John and Jesus and give this final announcement of Jesus' resurrection. It seems that the believability of the angelic message is cast into doubt as a result of the disciples' distrust of the women's credibility.

Jesus' view

Foolishness and belief. The initial words of Jesus are used to remind the reader of the disciples' behavior throughout Luke's story—they are slow in heart to believe. Jesus calls them "foolish," ignorant of God's ways. Just like the Pharisees, whom Jesus calls fools (11:40) because they do not understand true purity, just like the rich man in the parable who does not understand that he cannot take his riches with him when he dies and is therefore a fool (12:20), the disciples have difficulty understanding the significance of events, and they simply do not believe. This theme of belief runs throughout the story, and the narrator does not want to close without once more lifting up the importance of believing. In the same way that Jesus' parents did not understand Jesus' behavior at age twelve in the Temple, so also the disciples do not understand Jesus' purposes.[15]

Jesus accuses Cleopas and his companion of being slow to believe. This introduces the notion of a process of *coming to believe* as opposed to a punctiliar concept of believing. The slowness to believe is related to the disciples' expectations of how and when the Messiah would act. The idea of the process of coming to believe is discussed further below, but first, Cleopas' assumptions about the Messiah need to be corrected by a scriptural understanding of the suffering and servanthood of the Messiah.

The Messiah must suffer and enter his glory. The Messiah is "The Anointed One." This is made clear in Jesus' inaugural sermon: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me . . ." (4:18). The Messiah is announced by this title to the shepherds at Jesus' birth (2:11); we understand how Israel had been waiting, like Simeon, for the Lord's Messiah (2:26); we see how characters without the narrator's vantage point wonder if John the Baptist could be this Messiah (3:15); if it is questioned by some characters in the story, others—such as demons—know the truth that Jesus is

14. See 8:2–3, where Jesus and the disciples are financially supported by some women, and 23:49, 55, where the Galilean women remain with the crucified Jesus and follow his body to the tomb.

15. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity*, 54.

Jesus' direct reference to himself as Messiah is limited to post-resurrection scenes.

this Messiah (4:41); and finally, within the story, the disciples, represented by Peter, acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah (9:20). The title of Messiah is used elsewhere in the story by Jesus' enemies and a criminal, who use it mockingly (22:67, 23:2, 35, 39). Finally, Jesus himself uses the term—first in a riddle to the scribes (20:41) and then in his final explanations to the disciples about the role of the Messiah as outlined in the Jewish Scriptures (24:26, 46). Jesus' direct reference to himself as Messiah, however, is limited to post-resurrection scenes. Prior to the crucifixion, Jesus refers to himself as "Son of Man." It seems that there is no difference of role between the two titles in Luke. Jesus uses Son of Man to avoid premature conflict with the leaders.

Luke uses the three scenarios of temptation to state clearly that Jesus refuses to use his power to avoid physical suffering. He refuses to use power to circumvent suffering to "enter his glory." He refuses to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, even with God's promise of protection, but instead sets his face toward Jerusalem, knowing that "no prophet can die outside of Jerusalem" (13:33).

By speaking about himself in the third person, Jesus subtly gives the first foreshadowing: "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering" (9:22); second, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands" (9:44); and third, "they will kill him" (18:33). Each time, the disciples do not grasp what is being said. The reason for their incomprehension is made known to the reader in this third passage: "But they understood nothing about all these things; in fact, what he said was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said."

There is a thread of "necessity" throughout Luke—4:43; 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7, 26, 44. This necessity is connected to following in the steps of previous prophets and fulfilling previous prophecies. At the same time, the disciples' incapacity to imagine that the Messiah must suffer keeps them from grasping what Jesus is foreshadowing. On two occasions Jesus speaks plainly of his coming suffering: before the Son of Man comes, he must first "endure much suffering" (17:25), and he is eager to eat the Passover meal with his disciples before he suffers (22:15). If Jesus is the Messiah, it is inevitable that part of the role of the Messiah is to suffer and die.

The second aspect of the Messiah's role is that he will "enter his glory." After the third day, Jesus is to rise again and gloriously defeat death. One gets a glimpse of such glory as Jesus appears with Moses and Elijah in "his glory" (9:31). Glory is to be recognized as a place of honor. One who is glorified is one who is honored. Jesus has made clear that those who humble themselves will be exalted (14:11). Such glory is a combination of Jesus' defeat of death in the resurrection and his placement at the right hand of God in his ascension. This position of honor is proverbially alluded to in 20:42: "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." This Messiah, the Son of Man, will not remain in heaven: "Then they will see 'the Son of Man com-

ing in a cloud' with power and great glory" (21:27). This authority and power complete the prophecies made concerning the Messiah.

On Moses and the prophets. Jesus explained to the two disciples the role of the Messiah as one who suffers and then enters his glory by turning to Moses and all the prophets. What did Jesus say to those disciples? Which passages did he use in the interpretation?[16] The narrator, by design, seems to be challenging the reader to look deeply into the Scriptures in order to answer such questions. Jesus' teachings are purposefully based on Scriptures. During Jesus' temptations in the desert, each of the devil's temptations is rebuffed through Scripture (4:1–13). Reference is made throughout the story of obeying "according to Moses"—whether it is the cleansing sacrifices after Jesus' birth (2:22) or after the healing of a leper (5:14). Within the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man is told that his brothers need to listen to "Moses and the prophets" (16:29). When Jesus explains the role of the Messiah and "the things concerning himself," we are pointed to the Jewish Scriptures in the same way that Abraham points the rich man's brothers to Moses and the prophets.

Such a sense of fulfillment of the Scriptures is related to the prophecies concerning Jesus and to a sense of destiny. Destiny is implied with such wording as "the Messiah *must* suffer . . ." and in the third foreshadowing of Jesus' death when he states, "everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished" (18:31).

At table at Emmaus

The three travelers arrive at Emmaus and shift from travel companionship to meal fellowship.[17] The disciples demonstrate hospitality by inviting the stranger to stay with them. Similar hospitality was shared with the crowd of 5,000 "at the end of the day" and with the same reasoning now by Cleopas, in that "the day is almost over and it is getting dark."[18] Despite the fact that Cleopas and his companion are sad and disillusioned about Jesus' death, they are conscious of the needs of a stranger. Although the disciples cannot recognize the stranger, they have understood (in part) the message of Jesus by welcoming a stranger in need into their house.[19]

Having arrived at Emmaus, the episode finds the three characters at table ("reclining" in Greek). Many important discussions, teachings, and events occur around the table in Luke. There Jesus clarifies that his message of repentance is to those who recognize their need (5:32). At another Pharisee's table, Jesus assures the marginalized of their forgiveness (7:50). Jesus uses mealtime to challenge human customs of purity (11:37–54). Supporting one of Luke's motifs, Jesus exploits the seating arrangements at a meal to instruct about honor (14:10).

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16. Another possibility for understanding the citation of Moses and the prophets (see Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity*) is that Jesus is referring to Moses as a prophet, not as the writer of the Torah. Jesus is giving OT examples of prophets—especially how these prophets were treated by the people ("It was necessary that the Messiah suffer these things. . ."—just like the other prophets did).

17. John Paul Heil, "The Meal Scenes in Luke Acts: An Audience-Oriented Approach," *Society of Biblical Literature* 52 (1999): 216.

18. Heil, "The Meal Scenes," 207.

19. Just as Jesus is hospitable to the marginalized people he encounters in Luke's story, the two disciples demonstrate this same hospitality by receiving the stranger (Jesus) into their house. See Robert J. Karris, "Luke 24 13–35," *Interpretation* 41, no. 1 (1987): 57–61.

Perhaps one of the most memorable is the last meal that Jesus shared with his disciples during the Passover (22:15). An eschatological messianic banquet is foretold there (22:16) in which Jesus will sit once again with his disciples. The reader sees the words in staccato fashion: take, bless, break, give.[20] The stranger in the Emmaus episode is doing these very acts as Jesus did when he fed the 5,000 and when he hosted the Passover meal. Through the breaking of the bread, Cleopas and his companion's eyes are opened. The invisible hand that kept them from recognizing the stranger in the first place once again touches their eyes, and they see him for who he is.

The moment Jesus is recognized is the moment he vanishes. Somehow, this does not surprise the disciples (as it certainly does the reader). This episode is not only about being an eyewitness to the resurrected Jesus, it also creates one more chance for the disciples (and the reader) to hear about the role of the Messiah and the timing of redemption. Moreover, the reader hears how Jesus fulfills the Scriptures in his suffering and dying in order to enter his glory.

To help us reflect on this, the narrator mentions the disciples' reflections about their burning hearts. The significance of such burning can only be articulated in retrospect. It seems noteworthy that the burning hearts are the very same hearts that Jesus described as slow to believe. Such a double use of the expression "hearts" underscores the narrator's emphasis on the need to recognize who Jesus is and to understand his role. The readers are prompted to consider their hearts in relation to the expectations and understandings of the role of Jesus as the Messiah.

It is not the first time that Jesus is recognized as the Messiah after a meal. Immediately following the feeding of the 5,000 (a meal in which Jesus "took, blessed, broke, and gave"), Peter goes beyond the disciples' common understanding of Jesus as a great prophet (7:16) to proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah (9:20). Is it sheer revelation that allows Cleopas to recognize Jesus as the Messiah? Or could it be also the setting of a meal in general and Jesus' role in particular?

In all three settings—Emmaus, the feeding of the 5,000, and Passover—Jesus is seen as the host of the meal. With the feeding of the 5,000, once the bread and fish are procured, he takes these elements, blesses them, and after breaking them gives them to the disciples to give to the crowd. At the Passover meal Jesus takes the bread, gives thanks, breaks it, and gives it to his disciples. Finally, at Emmaus, despite the fact that Jesus is the stranger and guest, it is he who takes the bread, blesses and breaks it and gives it to Cleopas and his companion—all of this presumably in the house of Cleopas, or at least at a meal where Cleopas would be the customary host and server. In each of these meal scenes Jesus plays the role of host.

But more than that, Jesus is the host who serves. Jesus, the invited guest, becomes the server in Emmaus. This is the role he designates for himself: "But I am among you as one who serves" (22:27). Jesus' servant posture helps Cleopas to recognize the Messiah. Cleopas' heart, which burned as he heard the role of the Messiah explained through the Scriptures, is no longer slow to believe.

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20. It is tempting to understand these words and actions in a liturgical setting of the Eucharist. However, it is probably anachronistic to interpret it in such a way. With all the meals in Luke, the Emmaus meal is another gathering where wondrous things occur in the solidarity of a meal fellowship.

Concluding scene in Jerusalem

Quickly ("that same hour") the disciples return to Jerusalem to tell the others. Finding the eleven apostles and other disciples, Cleopas and his companion cannot get their story out before the eleven blurt out their good news. Jesus has arisen!—and it is true, because Peter has seen him. Peter's eyewitness testimony wipes all doubt away that remained concerning the women's vision of an angel's tale. Such a focus on Peter also fulfills Jesus' words that he will be an encouragement to the other disciples after his three denials (22:33).

Finally, the two Emmaus disciples have a chance to tell what has happened to them. We do not hear their version of the details, but the narrator permits the reader two broad brush strokes that summarize the experience: the things that happened along the road, and how Jesus was made known through the breaking of the bread. And this is what Luke wants to leave us with in this episode: how Jesus interpreted the Jewish Scriptures as they related to his role as the Messiah who must suffer, and how Jesus as both host and servant is revealed to them in the sharing of a meal.

Key moments: teaching about suffering, and revelation as a servant

The Emmaus episode contains two climactic moments: (1) Jesus teaching the disciples from Moses and the prophets that the Messiah had to suffer in order to enter his glory; (2) intellectual understanding proves insufficient for them to see Jesus; it requires revelation from God. The instruction given to the two disciples helps them to lay aside their established expectations of the role and timing of the Messiah.

So much of what Cleopas and his companion have understood is correct about Jesus. He was a prophet; God and the people did witness to his powerful words and actions. However, their incapacity to imagine God's plan to have their Messiah condemned to death brings disillusionment (instead of hope) in their expectations of liberation for Israel. Nevertheless, with the explanations of the stranger they can begin to understand that suffering was joined to glorification in the prophecies about the Messiah. Such teaching allowed the disciples to become open to the possibility that the rejection by their chief priests and rulers indicated neither ultimate failure on the part of Jesus nor God's punishment. The teaching of the stranger enabled the disciples to enlarge their understanding of who the Messiah was.

The two disciples did not recognize Jesus on the road. Intellectual assent and understanding are insufficient to recognize what God is doing. Revelation is required. And revelation comes from outside us, from God. This is what happens during the meal at Emmaus. The divine passive "their eyes were opened and they recognized him" demonstrates the fact (and the necessity) of God's self-revelation.

However, such revelation does not happen without "its feet on the ground." God revealed Jesus to the disciples in the act of service of a meal. Through taking, blessing, breaking, and giving, Jesus demonstrated that the one who is above all is servant to all. In the posture of a servant, Jesus was revealed to the disciples. And they recognized him—in part because their minds had been opened to understand that the Messiah is first and foremost a servant.

Considering Contexts: Understanding Article X of the Formula of Concord Then and Now

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Recently, a group of notable contemporary Lutheran theologians offered the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) what they called an "Admonition for the Sake of the True Peace and Unity of the Church." This document opposes the Concordat between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church USA and contains a request for church leaders in the ELCA to carefully consider Article X of the Formula of Concord and the prohibition against forcing an adiaphoron onto the church. The intention of these authors is to avoid a split in the church over what are nonessential practices and to avoid making that which is indifferent—such as apostolic succession—necessary for unity.

Their determination and the purity of their motives are beyond question. Yet, the "Admonition" applies Article X of the Formula to a division within the church, brought about by persons within the church, and affecting only the church. Can Article X of the Formula, which deals exclusively with a conflict brought about by a collision between secular authorities and church leaders, really be applied so easily to the contemporary conflicts in the North American Lutheran Church? Apparently, it can:

> Therefore, it is wrong "when anyone imposes such ceremonies, commands, and prescriptions upon the community of God with coercive force as if they were necessary, against its Christian freedom, which it has in external matters.
> (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article X).[1]

Perhaps we would do well to reconsider the historical context of Article X in order to recall what the authors of the Formula meant by "coercive force."

In the early morning hours of February 18, 1546, the hope of both Emperor and Pope became a reality. Martin Luther, heretic, outlaw, and wild boar, died in the town of his birth. Luther's final words came in the form of a confession and a promise to die in the name of Christ and the doctrine that he had preached for so many years.

Shortly after his death a controversy arose in Lutheranism that echoed Luther's confession and promise, a conflict now

1. " Admonition for the Sake of the True Peace and Unity of the Church," *http://www.wordalone.org/conferences/theo2002/admonition/admonition.htm.*

commonly called the adiaphoristic controversy. At the heart of the conflict between Luther's followers was a question about whether compromise on church rites and rituals (usages) was consistent with the need for bold confession of faith in a time of persecution. Was the church willing to suffer and perhaps taste death in the name of Christ and the evangelical doctrine that it preached and confessed?

This controversy took root when both Emperor and Pope seized the opportunity to crush the Lutheran movement. The time was ripe. For the time being, the Turks were not threatening the lands of Christendom. Many of the conflicts in the empire had been settled. With the death of Luther, it seemed as though there was no evangelical leader with enough authority to hold the movement together.

As events unfolded, Emperor Charles V, in a tenuous alliance with Pope Paul III, attacked and defeated the league of Protestant princes and occupied the heart of the Lutheran movement, forcing the temporary closing of the University of Wittenberg. These defeated territories were placed under a new religious law that demanded the return of Protestants to the practices of the Roman Catholic Church.

Some Lutherans decided to compromise with the Emperor in hopes of saving their movement. They believed that in indifferent matters, which they called adiaphora, compromises could be made in the name of Christian freedom. This position was born of the hope that the heart of the Lutheran confession, justification by grace through faith alone, would survive changes in church usages. This party came to be called the Philippists, so called because of their commitment to the positions held by Philip Melanchthon.

Others refused compromise in the name of the good confession. Theologians such as Matthias Flacius and Nicolas von Amsdorf claimed that there are no indifferent matters—adiaphora—when the church is being persecuted. To protect their understanding of Christian freedom, these Lutherans refused to be compelled in matters of church usages when the secular arm of authority was forcing the issue. Their opponents called them Gnesio-Lutherans (Genuine Lutherans).

Eventually the Emperor and Pope lost control over the bodies and consciences of their German subjects, and the destruction of the Lutheran movement was avoided. However, the dispute among Lutherans that grew out of the period of persecution raged on until the publication of the Formula of Concord. In the words of its framers,

> . . . a dispute arose among some of the theologians of the Augsburg Confession over ceremonies and ecclesiastical practices that are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word but have been introduced into the church with good intentions for the sake of good order and decorum or to maintain Christian discipline.[2]

After considering the causes of the adiaphoristic controversy, namely the defeat of the Schmalkald League and the imposition of the Augsburg Interim on German lands, it must be concluded that the primary issues at stake were not only theological but were also the result of a collision between theological principles and political realities. Christian freedom was being threatened due to the imposition of rites and rituals by secular authorities. From this historical lens I conclude that the response to the adiaphoristic controversy found in the Formula was an attempt to resolve the need for clear confession of

2. *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 515.

faith *when the faith is being persecuted by secular authorities.*

Thus, the Formula sought to protect Christian freedom in a time of persecution by calling for restrictions on adiaphora until the persecution ended. However, when there is no threat of physical persecution by secular authorities, the doctrine of Christian freedom is not in jeopardy, so long as the church maintains sound doctrine, and the good confession can be made alongside the acceptance of adiaphora. This conclusion limits the extent to which Article X of the Formula of Concord can be applied to contemporary questions concerning adiaphora.

The adiaphoristic controversy was rooted in a particular conflict that demanded a particular response.

The history behind the adiaphoristic controversy tells the story of how the Lutheran movement survived past the lifetime of its great leader. The conflict forced the nascent Reformation churches to consider those things that might jeopardize the doctrine of justification and the Christian freedom that followed such a liberating theology. In addition, the adiaphoristic controversy brought to a head the issue of Christian freedom as it related to the demands of secular authority. As a result, the controversy forced the Lutheran Church to determine how to apply the theology of Luther, and Melanchthon's Augsburg Confession, to circumstances not imagined by the reformers.

In the final analysis both sides were correct. The Formula of Concord upheld the position of the Philippists that churches were indeed free to accept adiaphora when they were not viewed as true worship of God. When adiaphora were forced upon the church by secular authorities, the viewpoint of the Gnesio-Lutherans was upheld.

How, then, can the contemporary Lutheran church apply Article X to its own conflicts? The adiaphoristic controversy was rooted in a particular conflict that demanded a particular response. Both the conflict and the response to the conflict are rooted in the persecution of the church by secular authorities. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, this historical reality places Article X firmly within a distinct context. Thus, application of the confessional response to the adiaphoristic controversy to contemporary conflicts in the church is somewhat problematic.

The modern church finds itself in a position similar to that of Lutherans in the sixteenth century. How is the church to understand and apply Luther's theology to conflicts that he could never have imagined? Additionally, how is the church going to apply sixteenth-century confessions, particularly Article X of the Formula, to twenty-first–century conflicts?

To make the point more clear, the following questions must be asked and answered. Do contemporary church leaders recognize the struggle between Christian freedom and the demands of secular authority as the root of the sixteenth-century conflict over adiaphora? By contrast, do they apply the confessional response to the adiaphoristic controversy to any and all church struggles that deal with indifferent matters? Does the historical context affect

the way that the confessional response to the conflict is applied to contemporary conflicts in the church? Is the historical context ignored?

The Confessions provide clear directives on issues related to adiaphora. In a time of peace, when secular authorities are not interfering with the ordering of the churches, adiaphora are acceptable. In a state of persecution, when a good confession is called for, adiaphora must be rejected if imposed on the church. This principle was much needed during the Nazi regime when the secular authorities demanded to control the practices of the church. Article X was also applicable during the period of apartheid in South Africa when the secular authorities forced upon the church their bigoted worldview. However, the Formula offers little guidance in regard to questions concerning rites and rituals that the church *imposes upon itself.*

The agreement between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church USA may or may not be undesirable. But it is not undesirable for the reasons stated in the "Admonition." The adiaphoron in question is not being placed upon the church by coercive force, at least not the kind of coercive force addressed in Article X of the Formula, unless we conclude that an ecclesiastical vote is as threatening as a sword. Episcopal succession may not be a theological necessity, but it is not being forced on to the church by secular authorities. How then does Article X of the Formula apply to a mandate voted on by the 1999 Churchwide Assembly? In short, it doesn't.

The church owes the Word Alone Network thanks for its efforts to maintain confessional clarity and its commitments to encouraging dialogue about the nature of Lutheran identity. The church must also hold the Word Alone Network to the highest of standards, including a commitment to the contexts of the confessions that they seek to defend.

Jesus as Mentor: Biblical Reflections for Ministry with Young Adults

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In her acclaimed book on the "twenty-somethings" between the ages of seventeen and thirty, Sharon Parks underscores the critically important role of the mentor, the mentoring environment, and mentoring communities as contexts that nurture the vital growth of young adults toward maturity and wholeness in becoming at home in the world. These mentoring environments serve young adults with a network of belonging that can "offer a powerful milieu and a critical set of gifts in the formation of meaning, purpose, and faith."[1]

Parks intentionally frames her work in the larger context of *faith* as a human universal that is integral to all human life and related to meaning, trust, and hope (p. 16). Indeed, she ultimately associates *faith* with the "act of composing and being composed by meaning . . . some conviction of what is *ultimately* true, real, dependable within the largest frame imaginable" (p. 20).

For the Christian tradition, that sense of faith is connected to the activity of God in Jesus Christ. The following reflections connect important insights from Parks about mentoring with mentoring parallels from the canonical Gospels of the New Testament about Jesus of Nazareth as a paradigm for and an encouragement to campus ministers and others in mentoring environments, especially with young adults.

When we look in the New Testament to focus on the model of Jesus, we find that he is already being used as a mentor figure by the Gospel writers for their own communities. Writing at least several generations after the ministry of Jesus, the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John intentionally selected episodes and sayings from the life of Jesus and the stories about him in the emerging Christian communities that would serve as mentoring encouragement in each of their contexts as they faced specific threats and challenges to their newfound faith and new relationship with one another. In their narratives, the Jesus we see is a figure whose words and actions are already targeted in special documents for distinctive mentoring environments. Indeed, each of the Gospels as a whole offers a striking illustration of four of the five major functions of a mentor as defined by Parks (pp. 127–33).

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[1] Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 127.

Reflection #1
"A Network of Belonging"

A mentoring community is a network of belonging that constitutes a spacious home for the potential and vulnerability of the young adult imagination in practical, tangible terms [offering] a sociality that works (at least well enough) physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually as the young adult becomes more fully at home in the universe. (Parks, p. 135)

Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them . . . the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. (John 14:23, 26 NRSV)

In the Farewell Discourses of John, chapters 14–16, the Johannine Jesus continues the table conversation of the Last Supper and prepares the disciples for his departure. His reassurance to the disciples underscores that their unclarity and confusion about their future—also present in the trauma of the Johannine community—will be clarified by the work of the Spirit sent by the Father in Jesus' name.

As we work with young adults, particularly those beginning their first year in college, we can reassure them that the confusion and disorientation they are experiencing will lessen as they find their new "home" more comfortable and gain a network of new friends, especially in the supportive environment of a community of faith with those on the same spiritual journey, with the same questions and confusions, and the same Spirit who binds us all together.

Reflection #2
"Big Enough Questions"

Mentoring communities that serve to recompose meaning and faith in the young adult years are particularly powerful in their capacity to extend hospitality to big questions. If the process of imagination and ongoing development is partially prompted by conscious conflict, then big questions play an important role. . . . The mix of questions arising from within and posed from without can create great questions that launch the worthy investment of a lifetime. (Parks, pp. 137, 139)

Nicodemus said to [Jesus], "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born? . . . How can these things be? (John 3:4, 9 NRSV)

Nicodemus, mentioned only in the Gospel of John, was a Pharisee and probably a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest governing body. Nicodemus was a learned representative of the religious tradition of Israel, but for John he exemplified the contrast between the old standards of that tradition and the new realm—"born from above"—which Jesus and John's community embodied. Nicodemus came by night, literally "in the dark" about this new revelation of God in Jesus. But Nicodemus, to his credit, was asking questions—big questions—trying to relate this new realm of Jesus into the old, comfortable categories that he could comprehend. As is typical in the Gospel of John, Jesus articulates this new revelation of God in simple vocabulary that disguises the complexity of the concepts and transposes the conversation to a deeper level.

In our ministries with young adults, questions are the order of the day, including big questions having to do with vocation, sexuality, relationships, faith, and more. As we engage students and others in these and other pressing questions of life, we will be stretching them—and sometimes ourselves as well—in ways that help them see God more clearly as their partner in a life adventure that is indeed "born from above." In the process of addressing these questions, lives are changed, faith is deep-

ened, and light shines where there was darkness.

Reflection #3 "Encounters with Otherness"

Constructive, transforming encounters with otherness and true exchange of ideas are facilitated in mentoring communities, where hospitality to otherness is prized and practiced. . . . Constructive encounters across any significant divide set at the soul's core an experience of knowing that every assumption may be potentially transformed by an encounter with otherness. (Parks, p. 141)

Jesus said to the Syrophoenician woman, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." (Mark 7:27–28 NRSV)

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus constantly seems to be stretching people's perceptions about the boundaries of God's love. In this story of the Syrophoenician woman, Jesus travels with his disciples into Gentile territory outside the "boundaries" of Israel. In response to the woman's request for Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter, Jesus rearticulates the traditionally assumed boundaries of God's care and blessing focused on the people of Israel.

Jesus is setting up his disciples for a lesson in inclusivity as he counts on the strength of faith that brought the woman to him in the first place. The woman's skillful response did not disappoint. Jesus' field trip with his disciples underscores the boundary-breaking love of God.

This same border crossing and boundary breaking, consistent with God's intentions for reaching out to all of humanity, happens as we mentors provide occasions for our students to stretch their sense of God's love and care to others whom society might see as objects of insult or derision. Interreligious dialogue among students, an ideal opportunity during the college years, can also be fueled by this same understanding and serves to strengthen our own roots of faith, while we grow in our appreciation of others.

Reflection #4 "Habits of Mind (1): Dialogue"

Dialogue is not just talk. It is a way of being in conversation with others that involves a good deal of listening, desire to understand, and willingness to be affected—to be moved and informed, and to change one's mind. (Parks, p. 142)

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink.". . . The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?". . . Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." (John 4:7, 9, 10 NRSV)

Jesus is engaging the Samaritan woman in a dialogue in typical Johannine fashion: simple words representing deeper meaning and human confusion evolving into growing understanding. Jesus engages this woman in ways that surprise, confront, and stretch her to new realization and faith. An important part of that dialogue was Jesus' unspoken but profoundly evident acceptance of this Samaritan woman, whose gender and ethnicity were both traditional reasons for her not to be approached by a Jewish man.

This is an encounter where the woman discloses information about herself—often with the prompting of Jesus—and Jesus reveals his identity in a measured way that the confused woman can absorb. Both share about themselves through talking and listening and then arrive at a deeper relationship. Jesus takes the time to stay with

the conversation to honor the woman's need for incorporating profoundly new information into her thought world and growing into a new understanding.

In our dialoguing with young adults, we have the same opportunity that Jesus had to give the gifts of time and space and confrontative listening, as we desire to understand their questions and concerns. Not only does that build and honor relationships, but also we ourselves grow in the process.

Reflection #5 "Habits of Mind (2): Critical Thought"

[C]ritical thought is the capacity to step outside of one's own thought and reflect upon it as an object, to recognize multiple perspectives and the relativized character of one's own experience and assumptions. . . . Mentoring environments that serve the formation of adult faith extend hospitality to critical thought and invite its further development. (Parks, p. 143)

Jesus asked, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." (Mark 8:27–29 NRSV)

In the early chapters of the Gospel of Mark, the actions of Jesus provoked questions about his identity, even from the disciples themselves ("Who then is this?" 4:41). Here Jesus asks the disciples directly first about how he is perceived by others, then, pointedly, how they themselves understand his identity. In his usual role of spokesperson for the disciples, Peter correctly labels Jesus as the Messiah, but, as evident in the verses that immediately follow, he has yet to understand what that term really means for Jesus' arrest, suffering, and execution.

The beginnings of a critical assessment of Jesus' identity are present with the disciples, as Peter articulates that understanding. Jesus then invites his followers to view the traditional religious designation of Messiah in a new way. For the disciples, that will take more time and experience with Jesus, including Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection—and their persistent Spirit-guided reflection about it—before their understanding becomes clearer.

In our mentoring of young adults, we also need to provide a safe and supportive yet challenging environment where honest questions are honored, where critical thinking is welcomed, and where an adolescent faith can mature, especially in the college years.

Reflection #6 "Habits of Mind (3): Connective-Systemic-Holistic Thought"

The capacity to see distinctions and differences must be combined with the capacity to discover the fitting connections among things, to recognize how the vast tissue of life is dynamically and interdependently composed . . . the ability to structure the facts, placing them in relationship with one another. (Parks, pp. 144, 145)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because [the Spirit] has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, . . . to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18–19 NRSV)

In the Gospel of Luke, the first words we hear from Jesus in his ministry are his reading from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue. He then proceeds with a commentary on those verses that identifies his whole ministry—and, for Luke, even that of Jesus' disciples—in terms of a Spirit-empowered mission to bring the healing and restorative care of God to all people, especially the weak and marginal in society.

With the words from the prophet Isaiah, Luke shows the continuity of the work of Jesus and his disciples with the role of Israel as Servant to embody the care of God as a Spirit-led people. The mission of Jesus and his followers is a holistic one, where the healing peace of God is shared with people physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

In our role as mentors to young adults, we also encourage those we serve to see life connected to God in Jesus Christ in terms of our Spirit-led calling to reach out to one another and to the needy in society with the peace of God in caring, forgiving, healing, and other restorative ways. Concrete opportunities to participate in Jesus' ministry of repairing the world by rehabbing homes, tutoring children, helping victims of HIV/AIDS, empowering the homeless, and more are channels of connecting holistic thought and effective action in the spirit and manner of Jesus himself.

Reflection #7
"Habits of Mind (4): A Contemplative Mind"

Big questions, prompted by dialogue with otherness and the critical thought it nourishes, activate the reimagination of meaning and faith, thus repatterning the connections among things. For this to happen in strong and trustworthy ways requires, as we have seen, the moment of pause-contemplation. . . . Mentoring contexts that most profoundly serve the formation of adult faith provide an initiation into the power of pause. (Parks, p. 145)

In the morning, while it was still very dark, (Jesus) got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. (Mark 1:35 NRSV)

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus on more than one occasion models moments of pause and contemplation in connecting to God in prayer (1:35), resting from the pressures of ministry (6:34), and agonizing about the inevitability of his path to death (14:32). Jesus offers a paradigm for the disciples and for Mark's community of the need for moments of reflection about who he is, where he is going, and how God can support all of what is happening to him.

In times of persecution and uncertainty for Mark's readers, who may literally have to take up the cross and follow, Jesus exemplifies not only the external path through suffering and death to newness of life but also the internal path of cultivating the inner life that supports that journey in all of its immediate uncertainty.

In the mentoring environment of which we are a part, one of the best gifts we can offer young adults is an introduction to the process of contemplation. In the pressure and pace of society as well as academia, there is a deep need for such times of interlude for the conscious mind. Whether on a retreat or part of a regular gathering or an occasional event, part of the balance we can offer—and hopefully model!—is that intentional time of relaxation, reflection, or Sabbath making that renews not only one's intellectual life but also the life of faith.

Reflection #8
"Worthy Dreams (1): A Reach for the Ideal"

Dreams come in all shapes and sizes, from conventional to radical. But the Dreams that most profoundly serve the composing of a faith to live by stem for the most part from a particular capacity of the young adult: the capacity to envision the ideal. . . . By *ideal* the young adult means that which is pure, consistent, authentic, and congruent. (Parks, p. 146)

Jesus said, "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20 NRSV)

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Matthean Jesus articulates a profoundly

challenging and disturbing ideal, an ideal more than worthy of the young adult's definition of that term, which is "pure, consistent, authentic, and congruent." In demanding a higher righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus is calling followers in Matthew's community to an ethic that manifests itself in absence of anger, love of enemies, faithful spousal thoughts, shared possessions, and more.

The point is not just doing more, but doing in the right spirit. Jesus is advocating the same consistency and congruence of intention and action that young adults desperately want to see, fulfilling not the letter of the law but the spirit of the law. That is precisely what Jesus is advocating in the double commandment of love for both God and neighbor (Matt 22:38-40), which, Jesus says, summarizes and fulfills the Torah.

As we mentor young adults, it is critical to be authentic and congruent in word and action. The life of love to which Jesus calls us needs to be seen as not only immensely challenging but also profoundly worthy of pursuit. In that context, a worthy dream ("the critical task of young adult faith" [Parks, p. 146]) can be formed. Such a challenge by Jesus to a life of love, especially for the needy of the world, honors the quest of the young adult for that worthy dream.

Reflection #9 "Worthy Dreams (2): Vocation"

The Dream in its fullest and most spiritual sense is a sense of vocation. . . . It is a relational sensibility in which I recognize that what I do with my time, talents, and treasure is most meaningfully conceived not as a matter of mere personal passion and preference but in relationship to the whole of life. (Parks, p. 148)

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. (Mark 1:16-18 NRSV)

In the Gospel of Mark the first four people whom Jesus calls to be his followers—Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John—had fishing for a career. Their vocation as disciples, Jesus said, was to fish for people. Using the talents, abilities, and life experience that they already possessed, Jesus' new learners were called to see their lives from a new point of view: to do everything in life with the same love and care for people that Jesus himself did.

By following him and seeing him in action, they would learn experientially. Along with Mark's community in a time of persecution, they also would learn to take up the cross with Jesus. The uncharted territory into which they were called to follow was an adventure through which Jesus himself would go first. His resurrection affirmed the outcome, but their journey would inevitably be perilous.

Paraphrasing Frederick Buechner, Parks underscores for young adults and for all of us, "vocation is the place where the heart's deep gladness meets the world's deep hunger" (p. 148). Even though the adventure of life is perilous as seen in the life of Jesus and his early followers, those who are his followers in every age are heartened by his resurrection, empowered by his Spirit, and called to see our life purpose in using our time, talents, and treasure in passionate following of his way of love. Mentors are called to embrace and model that life and to share their struggles and joys in doing so.

Reflection #10
"Access to Images (1): Images of Truth: A World of Suffering and Wonder"

Forming a viable faith depends upon serious engagement with the truth of the world, the universe as it is, including "things that should not be so." This means that though we can never fully comprehend Truth, the young adult may learn to apprehend something of the wholeness of life—the infinite complexity of the social order and the more-than-human world in the dimensions of both suffering and wonder. (Parks, pp. 148–49)

[Jesus] called the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34 NRSV)

The truth about following Jesus is that there will inevitably be suffering, but inevitably also there will be the wonder of life being resurrected and made new. The Gospel of Mark is very clear about both realities for followers of Jesus.

In the midst of persecution in an era around the Jewish War and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C.E., the community for which Mark was writing his Gospel knew from personal experience about the cost of discipleship. The stark but obvious implication was that the crucifixion that Jesus underwent might well be a paradigm of their own future as Jesus called them to "take up their cross and follow me." But following Jesus also meant that, despite the pain and uncertainty of their path, they would be following Jesus to the wonder and joy of life resurrected.

As mentors of young adults, we also are called to be honest about the realities and challenges of following Jesus in a life of love that brings perils from those who are determined to be unloving. These same young adults are also called to see the suffering of others for whom we all are called to advocacy and care. But also, we who have the Spirit-led vision of faith see the joy of following the Resurrected One, who has shown us already the beauty of life made new.

Reflection #11
"Access to Images (2): Images of Transformation: Hope for Renewing the World"

Suffering and wonder, faithfully conceived, appear to be disparate, if not, opposing realities. They are resolved in the human soul only in the sensibility we call hope. . . . Accordingly, mentors serve well when giving access to an imaginal complex of integrating symbols that grasp the dynamic of dissolution and recomposition. (Parks, p. 150)

A windstorm arose on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves. . . . And [the disciples] went and woke [Jesus] up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" (Matthew 8:24-26a NRSV)

Matthew's version of the Stilling of the Storm has some striking features that underscore the seriousness of the storminess in his community. The storminess was huge. "Earthquake" is the term of this writer, in contrast to Mark's "squall," to describe the magnitude of the difficulties, be they expulsion from the synagogue, the trauma of admitting Gentile believers, or persecution by Roman authorities. On the other hand, the magnitude of the help from God's presence in Jesus in their situation was also great—so great, in fact, that Jesus first lectures the disciples (and Matthew's community) about having "little faith" while the storm is still raging! Perhaps that is the point: *while* the storms of life are raging, we have the assurance that the One who weathered the outrageous storm of the cross and who was also raised from death is with us through our worst storms and assures us

that life will be made new.

In working toward a more mature faith, young adults need this image of Jesus. As mentors, we can emphasize that there is hope beyond despair, freedom beyond bondage, and life beyond death. The dynamic of dissolution and recomposition underscored by Parks is indeed the motif of death and resurrection that we ourselves have experienced through many of life's traumas and that we share reassuringly and promisingly with those we serve.

Reflection #12
"Access to Images (3): Positive Images of Self"

Forming a worthy dream also depends on access to positive images of self linked with a compelling sense of possibility and aspiration. . . . Young adults hunger for images of self that promise authenticity and a mix of competence, excellence, and the finest qualities of life, without minimizing the struggle inherent in claiming these qualities, a struggle of which the young adult now has the capacity to be acutely aware. (Parks, p. 151)

You are the light of the world . . . let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14, 16 NRSV)

In the midst of persecution and uncertainty, the Matthean community is called to be—and affirmed as—"the light of the world." In the call to a higher righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees and includes even love of enemies (and persecutors), the Matthean Jesus invites us all to let the light of that love ("good works") shine in all we do, so that God the Source of that loving behavior is praised. That encouragement to fulfill our identity as bearers of the light of love is not only a calling, it is an affirmation of a Spirit-empowered possibility.

As young adults hunger for a self-image that is authentic and competent and that also gives them a vision for the potential of life as it could become, this image of "bearing the light of love" in the world is a powerful image for the self.

Part of what makes this image so powerful is that it portrays a gift that comes through God's indwelling Spirit rather than an inherent characteristic that we have to manufacture by ourselves. To use that gift, however, is to struggle against forces that work against light and love in the world. In our mentoring, we can affirm the faith-based reality that the love to which we all are called is indeed possible, because God's Spirit empowers not only our efforts but also the efforts of the supportive community of which we are a part. We can offer positive biblical images of self for young adults to explore and claim.

Reflection #13
"Access to Images (4): Images of the Other as Both Similar and Unique"

In the search for a knowing of oneself that can be meaningfully sustained, our images of the other make an enormous difference. How we construe the other is an elemental ingredient in composing self and world and in the formation of faith: who and what we trust, who *we* are and who *they* are, and what we consider worth our time and trouble. (Parks, p. 152)

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them . . . squandered his property in dissolute living . . . his elder son . . . became angry. (Luke 15:11ff. NRSV)

The Prodigal Son is really, of course, a parable about a Loving Father whose extravagant love and forgiveness for the younger son makes the older son outraged. As a commentary on Luke 15:1–2, where Pharisees and scribes are incensed that "This fellow [Jesus] welcomes sinners and eats

with them," this parable shows that the Pharisees (older brother) are not left out of the Loving Father's care but that they need to let wayward ones experience the same love that they enjoy. But the Pharisaic older brother cannot tolerate that kindness, shown by the party (and Jesus' eating with sinners). The very character of God's extravagant mercy—from which *all* benefit, some myopically—is at issue. That is the ministry that Jesus embodied. Can faithful, upright people allow God to be merciful to the undeserving?

This issue manifests itself in the world of young adults as a matter of empathy, which leads to increased self-understanding, Parks relates. To learn about and understand the situation of another is to learn about and understand oneself more deeply. If the older brother in the parable can understand his younger sibling's need and rejoice in his growth, the elder will grow to understand his own need better. As we mentor young adults, the growth from their connections to and empathy with those different from themselves cannot be overestimated.

Reflection #14
"Access to Images (5): Images of Interrelatedness and Wholeness: Institutions that Work"

The faithful moral imagination is increasingly dependent upon recognizing the interrelatedness of all creation. . . . Organizations and institutions that can serve as images of meaningful wholeness and interrelatedness are the soil in which the seed of vocation may grow. . . . In reflecting on the formation of people who can sustain commitment to the common good, we have come to believe that most had the opportunity during their formative years to be part of some workable, effective institution. (Parks, pp. 153, 154)

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit. . . . Abide in my love. (John 15:4–5, 9 NRSV)

The image of the vine for the people of Israel, nurtured and cared for by God the vinegrower in the Hebrew Scripture, is the background for this important discourse by the Johannine Jesus to underscore the importance of John's community's being connected as branches to Jesus who is the vine. The connection is vital, because only in that "abiding" as branches and vine together can the fruit of love be manifest in the lives of the faithful.

Not only is that connection important for the individual, it is also crucial for the life of the community. As each branch is joined to the same vine, community is created. The fruit bearing of *love* ("keeping the commandments," vv. 10, 12) continues to happen together in a mutually supportive connectedness that nurtures all.

This kind of interrelatedness and wholeness is crucial for young adults, who seek to be part of a larger effort and worthy purpose. In their formative years as we mentor them in faith groups of common intention, they can see embodied there the vision for a community of faith, where their own involvement makes a difference not only in their own lives but in the lives of others, and they see their connectedness finding its nourishment in the love of God in Christ.

Reflection #15
"Communities of Practice (1): The Practice of Hearth"

Hearth places are where we are warmed in both body and soul, are made comfortable, and tend to linger . . . hearth places invite pause, reflection, and conversation . . . young adult faith is forged in an ongoing dialogue that . . . cannot usually be accomplished in fleeting sound bites. It requires something more like a hearthside conversation. (Parks, pp. 154–55)

Martha welcomed [Jesus] into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks. (Luke 10:38–40 NRSV)

Martha was trying to do the right thing in her focus on hospitality and welcome. In the biblical world, the laws of hospitality were important. Martha may have been attempting to serve many guests. So, her irritation at Mary for not helping is understandable, and her enlisting of Jesus to underscore this worthy effort makes sense, especially since Jesus himself embodied hospitality to many, including the socially unacceptable.

Mary was also taking on a laudable role, that of a disciple who sits at the feet of Jesus. She was absorbed in what he was saying. In this case, Jesus embodies not hospitality but the "hearth," so crucial for young adults. Jesus becomes the hearth place where Mary is "warmed in both body and soul, [is] made comfortable, and tend[s] to linger" (Parks, p. 154).

For young adults, says Parks, "There is a hunger . . . for hearth and for conversation that begins when it happens and concludes whenever" (Parks, p. 155). In our role as mentors, especially in campus ministry, we are continually offering both planned and serendipitous opportunities to provide hearthside conversation. In the important process of offering the hospitality of Martha and Jesus, we are providing space and time where gatherers can be warmed in body and soul in a welcome place where hearts linger and imaginations are nourished.

Reflection #16
"Communities of Practice (2): The Practice of the Table"

Young adults are drawn to places that nourish them: places that in very practical terms recognize that the body, the heart, and the intellect are intimately interrelated and the whole is nourished. Because today's young adults have in many cases not had the practice of the table, there is a good deal at stake in whether or not mentoring communities incorporate a table practice as an elemental feature of common life. (Parks, p. 156)

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:1–2 NRSV)

Jesus' hospitality was famous, and he endured much criticism from the religious establishment because of those he invited to his table. He "welcomes sinners and eats with them" was meant to be a negative judgment by the Pharisees and scribes but was ironically a high compliment and superb testimony to the fact that Jesus congruently practiced what he preached about the inclusive love of God, who desires to embrace all humankind with healing love.

As Jesus illustrates to his opponents with the three parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Sons (both prodigal son and older brother), the meal-parties of hospitality are a rejoicing over those who have grasped the welcoming embrace of God that was there for them all along. Jesus' practice of table hospitality was an embodiment of his person and message.

Campus ministries and other venues for young adults are frequently well known for providing food. Peers sometime do the cooking as a way to emphasize the welcoming effort. The challenge often is helping *all* to feel welcome and included, especially when lively conversation leaves out those who don't easily fit in. Our mentoring role at such times becomes vitally important as we seek to model the inclusive hospitality of Jesus, who reached out especially to those on the margins. We are called to be that kind of community of practice.

Reflection #17
"Communities of Practice (3): The Practice of the Commons"

I am persuaded that if young adults are going to become at home in the universe in ways that prepare them for citizenship on what now has become a global commons, they need to be grounded in faith shaped, in large part, by a micro experience of the commons—an embodied image and practice that nourishes an imagination of the possibility of shared participation in creating the common good. (Parks, p. 157)

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23–24 NRSV)

In Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5–7), Jesus emphasizes the higher righteousness that goes beyond the letter of the Torah yet fulfills the spirit of the law and the prophets in such an all-inclusive way that a new kind of community is created. That new community lives out of a spirit of love that fulfills the intention of the law.

Creating a new "commons" of disparate elements from brothers and sisters in faith to enemies who may even persecute the faithful, that new community seeks to be reconciled to one another and to the world they inhabit. Living in such a way—by the Spirit of Jesus—they become what the Beatitudes encourage: the peacemakers, the merciful, and those who hunger and thirst for God's justice.

In the commons of a community of faith, living by the Spirit makes all the difference. Even worship becomes an experience of the commons, where the common good is sought and ritually celebrated. Facilitated by mentors, part of the worship rite in young adult Christian communities is the "sharing of peace" that practices the reconciling love to which we are called and to which Matt 5:23–24 alludes. The new commons for the community of faith is a microcosm of the global vision of God's reconciling peace, which we are also called to share.

Book Reviews

A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50. By François Bovon. Trans. Christine M. Thomas. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002. xxxvi and 440 pages. Cloth. $59.00.

This book is a translation of the first volume (1996) of Bovon's ongoing German project on the Gospel of Luke. Three German volumes have appeared to date; a fourth is awaited. Both the strengths and the weaknesses of *Luke 1:1–9:50* are tied to the nature of this larger work. On one hand, it is to be commended for the depth of treatment of individual pericopes. The downside is, of course, that one does not have in this one volume access to Bovon's engagement with the complete narrative of Luke, not to mention its continuation in Acts. I assume that Hermeneia is committed to publishing the rest of the volumes of the Lukan commentary.

I was pleasantly surprised by the range of Bovon's interest revealed in this work. Given the precedent of the other volumes that have appeared in this series, one should expect a very thorough historical-critical analysis. This is still clearly the dominant interest of Bovon, but it is not presented in a manner that is insensitive to either the theological or the literary dimensions of the text. Bovon, who now teaches at Harvard Divinity School, is a native French speaker who taught for years in Switzerland. The French exegetical tradition has gone its separate ways in the analysis of textual details and has a long history of stylistic elegance that is often lacking in German and North American academic exegetical treatments. Bovon's treatment of Luke is refreshing because it integrates the presentation of critical details with theological interpretations in ways that are not always predictable to the reader who is better acquainted with these other streams of biblical scholarship.

Although the volume would be a fine occasional resource to pastors, the expense of owning the projected multi-volume work will be prohibitive of all but the most robust book budgets. While recognizing Bovon's careful and elegant work, money perhaps might be more wisely spent on recent investigations that more explicitly privilege the theological and literary aspects of Luke's own two-volume work over its historical dimensions. In following this course, admittedly something of a compromise, current scholarship on Luke might be both more economically and more easily appropriated for parish-based preaching and teaching.

Erik M. Heen
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Brother of Jesus, Friend of God: Studies in the Letter of James. By Luke Timothy Johnson. Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 2004. 290 pages. Paper. $30.00.

The subtitle *Studies in the Letter of James* suggests the content of this book: a series of articles that Johnson wrote between 1982 and 2000. He also authored the Anchor Bible commentary on James. Since the discovery of the so-called James Ossuary, interest in James and his letter has grown considerably. Johnson found it a good opportunity to collect and publish his essays, some written for scholarly discussion, others for lay people, in book form. Essays written before 1994 were used in his commentary.

In such a collection one expects to find some repetition, differences, perhaps inconsistencies. However, there is a remarkable consistency throughout the book, almost as if Johnson had never changed his mind. The only inconsistency I could find is that in some essays Greek is printed in Greek type, in others it is transcribed into an excellent form (however, without an English translation). It would seem that for this collection of essays a unified form should have been used.

Johnson recognizes, of course, that there is

disagreement about the authorship of the epistle. However, he is convinced that James, the brother of Jesus, himself wrote the letter in the early period of the Christian church. Those who look for good and manifold arguments for this early authorship and authenticity will find Johnson a supportive voice and a rich source of data. After reading Johnson, I reread Dibelius's introduction to his commentary in the Hermeneia series, and I find Dibelius still more convincing. Johnson frequently refers to Dibelius. On p. 43 he mentions Dibelius's commentary, with a date of 1976. This gives the impression that the Dibelius commentary was written so recently. While the English translation did appear in that year, Dibelius wrote the first edition in 1920.

Johnson offers a rich survey of the interpretation of the letter and of its reception in the early church, discussed in a clever way in the essay "Journeying East with James: A Chapter in the History of Interpretation," like a travelogue through the Eastern church. Correctly, Johnson emphasizes that one must look not only at commentaries but also at other writings. In German literature this is called *Wirkungsgeschichte*, "History of Influence." It demonstrates a tremendous amount of research, because Johnson examined the whole Migne Greek Patrology to find where James is used and cites a large number of references. He is aware that not every similarity might come from James, because James shares traditions with 1 Peter, other writings of the NT, and other early writings.

The next essay also has an amusing title: "How James Won the West: A Chapter in the History of Canonization."

The chapter on "The Social World of James" discusses again the question of authorship but does not offer much on the social world of James. The close relationship that Johnson sees between James and Leviticus 19 is not completely convincing, but the similarity to sayings of Jesus is drawn out well. Johnson thoroughly investigates the mirror image in 1:22–25. He spends considerable effort in demonstrating the unity of 3:13–4:10 under the theme of envy, drawing connections to Hellenistic literature and especially the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, but I wonder if it is worth the effort. According to Johnson, it is a call to conversion, with the indictment in 3:13–4:6 and the call to conversion in 4:7–10, but it is not clear what conversion he has in mind.

In his discussion of the relationship of James to Paul, he emphasizes that they are not in contradiction; faith in the letters of Paul also requires action, while works in James are not without faith. In this connection, he stresses that he understands the phrase πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as subjective, that it is the human faith of Jesus. While I am not even convinced that this is correct for Paul anywhere, it certainly does not fit the occurrence in James 2:1. Showing partiality would compromise the faith of the believers, not of Jesus.

Johnson does not neglect the difficulties that exist in assuming an early origin of the letter but believes that some early writings, such as the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, I Clement, and the Shepherd of Hermas are well acquainted with James. While this does not prove that the letter was written by the brother of Jesus, it also does not contradict such a belief, Johnson says.

The last chapter is titled "Epilog: The Importance of James for Theology." Here, Johnson points out that James mentions God so often that it is really a theology and not a christology. He criticizes so-called theologies of the New Testament for their almost complete neglect of James in constructing a theology of the New Testament. This emphasis on God, Johnson believes, enables the letter to serve as a bridge to Jews and Muslims in discussing theology. However, this also demonstrates that the letter does not concentrate on Christ despite the two references to Christ in the epistle. Here, Johnson says very fine things about the ethics of the epistle and its significance for the contemporary church, but this is ethics and not theology.

The book is interesting to read. However, Johnson has not convinced me that the letter is really early, written by James, the brother of Jesus. One would expect different issues discussed at that early period and more significant references to Jesus, especially to his death and resurrection.

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***Church Unity and the Papal Office: An Ecumenical Dialogue on John Paul II's Encyclical* Ut Unum Sint.** Ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001. viii and 166 pages. Paper. $20.00.

This book is a collection of papers presented at the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology's 1999 Conference on Church Unity and the Papal Office. The essays are offered in direct response to and appreciation for Pope John Paul II's invitation to other church leaders and theologians in his 1995 encyclical letter, "*Ut Unum Sint*," to engage him in a "patient and fraternal dialogue" on the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, in particular the way that papal primacy is exercised on behalf of the unity of the whole church (p. 2). The contributors include several prominent ecumenists, each of whom considers ways to rethink the role of the papacy for a "new situation." Representing both Catholic and several Protestant traditions, the authors discuss the papacy in light of changing definitions of power, the challenges of democratization and the ecumenical movement, and the call to evangelization.

The most suggestive and far-reaching proposals are found in the essays by Catholic Brian E. Daley, Anglican Stephen Sykes, and Lutheran David S. Yeago. Daley argues that the papal office must serve the communion of the whole church, meaning that the church both accept and find ways to support and enhance diverse traditions and expressions of Christian diversity "as something willed by God and compatible with communion" (p. 55). Sykes deals forthrightly with the difficulty of exercising any ecclesial power in light of modern concepts of power and the contemporary pluralistic context, which is ambivalent about any exercise of power and offers a theological understanding of power grounded in a doctrine of creation.

Yeago, on the other hand, wishes to place the exercise of papal authority in the context of the mission of the church. The witness of the church demands a ministerium, because the Word has specific truth content. Yeago stretches to make a "Lutheran case" for a special Petrine ministry. Since the church exists in its most basic form as congregations presided over by pastors who proclaim the Word, the analogical argument can be made that for the church to exist as a universal communion it must be gathered by a pastor who speaks the Word of God to it (pp. 104–5). Although Yeago appeals to the Lutheran affirmation that the church is the "creature of the word," it still stands in the face of Luther's argument in *On the Papacy in Rome* that the church has no other head than Christ, even on earth.

Yeago's most concrete proposal is also his most controversial. Building on the notion of "magisterial mutuality" offered by the 1978 U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, Yeago suggests that Lutherans formally request the advice and counsel of the Holy See in matters of faith and morals. Given the recent pronouncements from the Congregation of Doctrine and Faith, one wonders how "mutual" this conversation would be.

Those who wish to find a place for a Protestant recognition of the Petrine ministry on the journey to full communion will appreciate the perspectives offered in these essays; others will be less convinced. Nonetheless, the underlying issue raised in these essays is one no Christian can afford to ignore: How do we, as separated ecclesial communions, embody a common witness to the one gospel of Jesus Christ?

Cheryl Peterson
Marquette University

Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters. By Michael J. Gorman. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004. xiii and 610 pages. Paper. $39.00.

Gorman's introduction to Paul concentrates interest on the thought of Paul while paying some attention to the historical and social context. He alerts readers in the introduction that he regards all the letters as authentic, written by Paul, except for 1 Timothy and Titus—though he allows for some liberty to the scribes who actually wrote the letters. And he says that six key terms "describe the frame of reference within which Paul is understood:" Jewish, covenantal, narrative, countercultural, trinitarian, and (above all) cruciform (p. xi).

His first six chapters describe Paul's world, recreate an outline of his life, describe his missionary activity, his letter-writing style, and his gospel, spirituality, and theology. He then discusses each letter using the same format: "The Story behind the Letter (history of Paul's missionary activity and subsequent relations with the church, situation addressed, with critical issues), "The Story within the Letter" (a running short interpretation of the letter), and "The Story in Front of the Letter" (citations about the letter by later writers, issues and questions for reflection, and a bibliography of commentaries). There are useful maps and illustrations in the text, though the significance of the pictures is not described.

While Gorman is clear about his own opinions as to the historical situation around each letter, he presents alternative views without naming those who hold them. Gorman's views on historical matters and origins will disturb no one; the major contribution of the work is the careful attention to the content of each letter. It will prove a useful addition to parish libraries. I would not use it as an academic resource or a seminary textbook, as it lacks much of the detail that I desire.

Edgar Krentz

Doing without Adam and Eve: Sociobiology and Original Sin. By Patricia A. Williams. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001. xvii and 227 pages. Paper. $18.00.

Patricia Williams seeks to correlate the insights of sociobiology with that of a scriptural anthropology properly liberated from traditional views of original sin. For Williams, the dominant Christian tradition has tended to read into the story of Adam and Eve a "catastrophic transgression," the "Fall," in order to give credence to the seriousness of Jesus' death as atonement (p. 21). This reading is unwarranted both scripturally and scientifically. Consequently, freedom and responsibility, good and evil are to be reinterpreted in light of new readings of scripture and our evolutionary history.

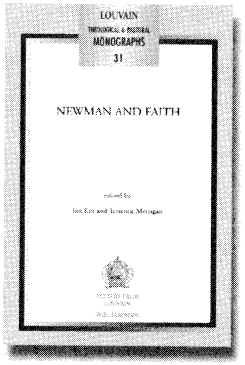
The Western theological tradition, as guided by Augustine, has emphasized that human freedom is found in a necessary obedience to God, while being shackled to the bondage of obedience to evil in sin (p. 46). Given this incompatibility between necessity and freedom, Williams sees the Protestant doctrine of original sin as incoherent (p. 55). Instead of the traditional Christian understandings of the Fall, we should adopt Harold Bloom's interpretation of Genesis, in which Adam and Eve's behavior is far less evil and more childish. Indeed, their punishment is overly harsh in light of their infraction.

The question of sin raises the wider issue of how to understand evil. Here, Williams follows Roy Baumeister's psychological interpretation of evil. We mythically construe evil as the result of people's egocentricism. We assume that the world is normally peaceful, that victims are pure, that harm is gratuitous and intentional, that evil behavior is from uncontrolled emotions, and that the evil person is an outsider or alien to the community. These assumptions, which are paralleled in Christian views of sin, are all open to challenge.

The question of human evil raises the issue of a biological basis for evil, or, for that matter, good. Hence, Williams looks to sociobiology, the genetic study of animal social behavior. It employs statistical theory to help interpret group behaviors and dynamics (p. 124). A major concern of sociobiologists is the nature and origin of altruistic behavior: Why has altruism evolved? In response to the view that altruism is an unintentional result of the "selfish gene," the survival, even in self-sacrifice, of one's genetics as shared with other related organisms, Williams responds by seeking an interpretation of charity on the basis of sociobiology. She points out that natural selection does not select genes but organisms; it produces organisms aware of other organisms, not genes, though it is true that charity toward kin permits the effective reproduction of shared genes (p. 132).

Williams's study culminates with four findings (pp. 157–58): (1) with regard to freedom, our actions are not determined by our evolutionary inclinations, (2) we sin "because we have natural, evolutionarily necessary desires that may become inordinate, especially in environments different from that in which our ancestors evolved," (3) "Charity is not natural to us, although it can arise in us by naturalistic

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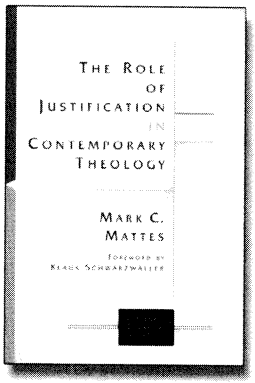
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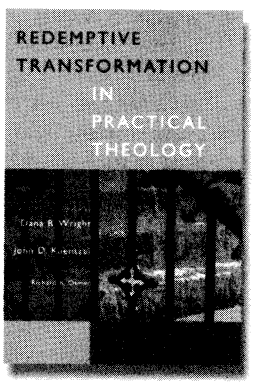
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means. Natural to us are our sociality and altruism," and (4) we are not suffering because of a God-inflicted punishment on Adam and Eve; our suffering arises from our limitations in a developing universe. This latter point raises the question of theodicy: we evolved to be cocreators with God; God becomes a cosufferer with us (p. 197).

This book wants to correlate highly complex material, biblical, doctrinal, and from the social sciences and biology. After a fashion, it offers a kind of theodicy, a defense of God in light of evil. With respect to Genesis 3, Williams favors a Jewish over an Augustinian interpretation of the "Fall," seeing this story as recapitulated in the lives of all people and not as the transmission of original sin across the generations. This reviewer puzzles over two matters: (1) To what extent is charity, apart from faith, marked by *ambitio divinitatis* (the attempt to be our own gods for ourselves)? (2) To what extent is sociobiology not an "objective" science but thoroughly contoured by Epicurean and Hobbesian suppositions? In any case, this book is worth one's thorough engagement.

Mark C. Mattes
Grand View College
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The Contemporary Quest for Jesus. By N. T. Wright. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, Facets, 2002. 104 pages. Paper. $6.00.

This Facets edition reprints Wright's 1996 book that was an excerpt from his lengthy work on the historical Jesus, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Fortress, 1996). In this reprint, Wright discusses scholars' contributions to the contemporary search for Jesus (termed "the third quest") by analyzing how their studies answer five key questions that investigate Jesus' relationship to Judaism on the one hand and the early church on the other. Overall Wright argues that today we cannot retreat from serious historical study of Jesus and that the long-term results of such study hold challenge and promise for the contemporary church's theological task.

In chapter 1 Wright provides a succinct review of the "quests" for Jesus over the last 200 years and their usefulness. His general conclusion is "that the Quest is vital, but difficult" (p. 21). In an extremely brief second chapter, Wright summarizes the published efforts of the Jesus Seminar and John Dominic Crossan as examples of "thorough-going skepticism," the label used by Albert Schweitzer for William Wrede's work.

In the opening section of his final extensive chapter (two-thirds of this short volume), Wright discusses assumptions and advances of "the third quest" for the historical Jesus—for example, its scholars' "attempt to do history seriously" (p. 31), their situating Jesus firmly within first-century Judaism, their focus on more Gospel material than the sayings of Jesus to understand the historical Jesus, and their homing in on key historical questions. In the remainder of this chapter Wright provides a comparative summary of how various scholars answer five crucial questions that have surfaced in the Third Quest: How does Jesus fit into Judaism? What were Jesus' aims? Why did Jesus die? How and why did the early church begin? Why are the Gospels what they are?

In this summary, Wright makes clear his own take on these five questions. Further, he asserts that the comprehensiveness and validity of any Jesus book rest upon how well the scholar's work answers all five questions. In Wright's judgment, most "third quest" writers highlight one or two of these questions at the expense of others. Before he concludes, Wright adds a sixth question—that of relevance. He emphasizes that current scholars need to discuss the implications of their historical-Jesus study for theology.

This brief and readable book should be of interest to biblical teachers, pastors, and lay persons who pay attention to the contemporary quest for Jesus. Wright has synthesized an enormous amount of scholarly work about the historical Jesus. He has done so not simply as an academic researcher but as a scholar who is deeply and passionately engaged in this "third quest." Hence he has framed his summary in light of his own long-term scholarly program. (Fortress recently published Wright's *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, the third volume in his ambitious series on the New Testament.)

It will take time for the scholarly and theological world to assess Wright's lasting contri-

bution to the study of both Jesus within first-century Judaism and the continuity and discontinuity between Jesus' agenda and the faith of the early church. In any case, his published work is clearly worth reading. This reprint offers an intriguing window into Wright's historical investigation of Jesus of Nazareth.

James L. Bailey
Wartburg Seminary
Dubuque, Iowa

On Thinking the Human: Resolutions of Difficult Notions. By Robert W. Jenson. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003. xii and 86 pages. Paper. $16.00.

In this deceptively short book, Robert Jenson takes up six notions that we need when discussing ourselves as human: death, consciousness, freedom, reality, wickedness, and love. Although we need them, Jenson notes, they persistently resist being thought satisfactorily. This is the case, he argues, because they are all notions from which we cannot gain sufficient distance in order to reflect upon them. That is, the self-involved character of our reflection hinders thought.

To take one example, our reflections on death inevitably fail because they become accounts of the continuation of consciousness in death, which is really but a mode of life and not an image of death at all (p. 2). *I* simply cannot think *my* death. For each notion, Jenson's resolution is found in the same place: the Triune God. Only when we think the human in light of the Trinity do we find our path illuminated. Only when we begin to think through our deaths and consciousness and freedom and so forth, beginning from the Son's death and divine freedom and so forth, do we transcend the aporias that otherwise plague our efforts at thinking the human.

This is a deceptively short book because time must be spent with it, the intricacies of the argument must be savored, if one is to follow Jenson's lead toward theological resolution of these difficult notions. It is not an easy read (particularly the philosophical critique and setting of the issues), but the time spent is rewarded.

Of course, not all of Jenson's resolutions will prove finally persuasive to all readers. The decisively theological and particularly Trinitarian character of this thought may rile some. And even among those who find his theological vision persuasive, there are grounds for disagreement. For example, at least to this reader the question remains open as to whether his effort to articulate a theo-logic of moral equivalence that distinguishes ordinary wickedness from radical evil runs afoul of his classic Augustinian commitments.

The inevitable disagreements notwithstanding, Jenson's little book is a rich resource for thinking theologically about difficult notions of the human.

Daniel M. Bell, Jr.
Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary
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Dancing with the Sacred: Evolution, Ecology, and God. By Karl E. Peters. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002. x and 171 pages. Paper. $15.00.

Through eighteen short chapters this book takes the reader on a dance from the starting point, "Thinking about God in a New Way," via explorations of erring as divine (because creation takes place by making mistakes!), of our social-ecological selves and our possibilities of living in harmony with cruciform nature, to a celebration of the earth as a child of God and of humans as the evolved mind of the earth-child.

Peters, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Religion at Rollins College, Florida, as well as president of the Center for Advanced Study in Religion and Science and coeditor of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, is in a position of looking back on many years of experience at the interface of religion and science. The guiding question for his book is: How may scientific knowledge help me in my religious living?

The answer is a concept of God that rests on the Darwinian ideas of random variation and natural selection. Peters speaks of God as a creative process or creative event rather than the Creator—a process that includes the emergence of new possibilities in nature and the universe, in

human history and culture as well as in personal living. His model exemplifies the turn from substance to relationality that is characteristic of much creative thinking nowadays. More poetically: God is like a dance (p. viii), or God is the music (p. 49). "By participating in the creative process we are dancing with the sacred" (p. viii).

It becomes very clear that a tribal God can no longer fulfil the role of a sacred center. Today, the sacred center needs to be the center of the entire universe as well as the center of our own lives. Peters's thoughts oscillate between a nonpersonal and a personal God. Although the support for a nonpersonal God is strong throughout the book, the personal image is not ruled out. On one hand, God is imagined as nonpersonal process. On the other hand, the divine may be described as "self-breathing; it has warmth or energy . . . ; it has desire" (p. 32)—a rather personal concept. God is encountered both in the creative potential of nature in the largest sense and in what Peters calls "our own sacred center."

The scientific, evolutionary picture that so powerfully states our kinship with the rest of the natural world, together with an understanding of our personal lives as dancing with the sacred, opens for Peters a hopeful way of dealing successfully with the crises we are facing, especially the ecological crisis. Thinking in terms of "webs of reality" allows for both an affirmation of the individual self and the transcendence of that self. Although the concept of an immortal, substantive soul cannot be maintained, there is still room for "big selves" and "a social-ecological-evolutionary kind of immortality as part of the fabric of an evolving universe" (p. 73).

Can we, in this theological ecology, continue to speak about living in accordance with the will of God? Yes, we can, according to Peters: by living within long-established requirements of nature and culture *and* by exploring the boundaries—even at risk!—we live in harmony with the sacred. The problem of evil is treated both in general under the aspect of cruciform nature and in particular as the walk "From Life to Love" (chap. 15). Especially in this chapter, but also in many other places, Peters becomes very personal. He invites readers to share his experiences of life and death and to be his partner in reflecting over them within a scientific and religious worldview.

The reader who looks for a distinct and clear-cut position to agree or disagree with may feel disappointed. There is a lot of both-and in this book. The position presented may look like a quest for spirituality shaped by a mixture of scientific secularism, Buddhist contentedness, and American Puritan self-control and self-leadership.

I appreciate the openness and plasticity of the dance metaphor. It is brilliant in its aesthetics but also yearning for interpretation. The metaphor itself does not guarantee us a dance of life for the ecological well-being of what we can experience as God's creation. It may as well be a dance of death. It may be a dance around the golden calf (Exodus 32) or the dance of self-glorification expressing utter contempt of weakness (F. Nietzsche in his dance-song to the Mistral in the appendix of *The Gay Science*). Embracing chaos in ourselves and around us does not automatically give rise to a dancing star.

This book touched me in several ways. I experienced its power not in its argument; the book is more a plea than an argument. Rather than being compelling, Peters invites us to probe the height, depth, and breadth of thinking about God in an age of science. He is offering some maps rather than giving directions. Even where I tend to disagree with the author, I still feel inspired and safe to ask myself: But what if? His personal honesty and his simplicity (without becoming simplistic) creates an open space where it feels good and right to breathe, think, and love.

The short chapters together with the particular style of the book make it suitable also for devotion, both private and in science-and-religion groups. Notes, annotated suggestions for further reading, and an index provide material for those who want to use this book as an entrance to further studies.

Antje Jackelén
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

A History of Lutheranism. By Eric W. Gritsch. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002. xiv and 346 pages. Paper. $29.00.

Gritsch has undertaken a difficult, if not impossible, task. He has attempted to write a history of the Lutheran movement without borders or boundaries, encompassing everything from the development of Lutheran doctrine to the formation of the Lutheran World Federation, in what he calls a "history of global Lutheranism."

Gritsch acknowledges the problems inherent in writing such a comprehensive history of Lutheranism. He presents the church with this new volume along with a challenge to other theologians and historians to fill in the gaps that a single volume inevitably leaves unattended.

He presents his history of Lutheranism in seven stages: the birth of the movement (1517–1521); growth and consolidation of Lutheranism in Europe and its surroundings (1521–1555); the movement toward confessional identity (1555–1580); orthodoxy (1580–1675); pietism (1675–1817); diversification (1817–1918), and new ventures (1918–). Final thoughts and reflections are found in "Conclusion: Forward to Luther?" in which Gritsch contemplates how Luther and his theology speak to the contemporary church.

Though Gritsch sets out to present a history of global Lutheranism, the book concentrates on European, Scandinavian, and North American Lutheranism. Certainly he mentions Lutheranism across the globe, but he does so in a few more than fifteen pages where he considers missionary work done in Asia, Africa, and South America and presents statistics of church membership across the globe. Gritsch expresses his desire for others to complete the work that he has begun with this volume. Perhaps future historians will accomplish this task by exploring how African, Asian, and South American Lutherans have added to the theological heritage of the church by forcing the question of the relationship between justification and justice for oppressed peoples, a relationship that Gritsch identifies as integral to servanthood rooted in Luther's theology.

This volume serves well as an introduction to major movements of Lutheran history. Though it falls short of its promised "history of global Lutheranism," its accessible style will surely compel those who have not heard the story of Lutheranism to look deeper into its rich history.

Nathan Montover
St. James Lutheran Church
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Graceful Living: Your Faith, Values, and Money in Changing Times. By Laura Dunham. RCA Distribution Center, 2001. vii and 170 pages. Paper. $14.95.

Laura Dunham transcends (while not entirely abandoning) the sometimes shopworn language of "stewardship" in this very helpful volume designed to aid congregations, individuals, and small groups in achieving more graceful living.

A Certified Financial Planner, a Presbyterian minister, and a former college vice president, Dunham brings a host of experiences to the task of writing a work about faith, values, and money. Dunham's background shows in the way that she struggles to integrate these themes, move congregations to a more holistic approach, and help churches to address finances more than a few times a year (Stewardship Sunday, an annual meeting, and periodic crises).

Written with a broad audience in mind, the greatest strength of this work is its ability to meet several related needs: introductory financial planner, a theology of money, and a guide to a wide range of circumstances ("just starting out," married life, single life, midlife, preparation for retirement, etc.). In three main sections, Dunham offers a theological vision of "choosing how to live" (Part 1), followed by a "Financial Primer" (Part 2), and an extended section on "Planning through Life's Transitions" (Part 3). Some "last words" address the challenges of making changes and sustaining such a life. A good bibliography, a short facilitator's guide, and exercises, charts, and questions for each chapter make this an ideal book for small-group use.

Except for a generic environmental interest and a few comments about the U.S. tax system, Dunham largely avoids political or ideological concerns. This helps make the book palatable to a wide range of readers. However, as denominations struggle with questions ranging from boycotts of chains who rely on underpaid immigrant

labor to investing in companies who derive huge profits from pornographic subsidiaries, such larger discussions probably justify some mention. Nonetheless, Dunham provides a great service in this work, speaking to an important set of issues that, unfortunately, is rarely discussed in such depth.

Jonathan Seitz
Princeton Seminary

Listen! God is Calling! Luther Speaks of Vocation, Faith, And Work. By D. Michael Bennethum. Lutheran Voices. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003. 95 pages. Paper. $9.99.

Vocation is on the minds of many pastors and other leaders in the church. Until now there hasn't been an introduction to the topic aimed at the general audience. Thanks to Pastor Bennethum, such an introduction is now available.

In the first chapter, "The Sunday-Monday Split," Bennethum notes that "all too many Christians think of the church as the people *in* the building or at least as people who are doing church-related things" (p. 14). That is, church and faith have to do with our activity on Sunday, but not the other days of the week. In the second chapter, "How the Split Came to Be," Bennethum names reasons for this split.

It is in chapters 3 and 4 that the value of this book shines forth. There Bennethum explicates Luther's understanding of vocation: "Martin Luther's bold claim was that all the tasks of one's life, any Christian's life, no matter how menial or mundane the tasks performed, provide an opportunity to express one's faith. For Luther, vocation was not a call to abandon the nitty-gritty of the world for a more pious and more prestigious status. Rather it was a calling to and within the place where one carried out one's everyday labors" (p. 45). Bennethum, following Luther, emphasizes repeatedly that we are not justified and loved for our activity in the "sacred" or "religious" realm. We are justified and loved rather on account of God's saving activity in Jesus Christ. The upshot of this is that no occupation is outside the pale of God's redemptive activity, and no occupation has a special place in God's heart.

The final two chapters offer strategies for lifting up Luther's teaching on vocation and examples of what such a congruence between doctrine and practice looks like. All in all, this is a wonderfully practical and timely book that ought to be read for its presentation of Luther's teaching on vocation as well its theological application to the present age and its practical pastoral strategies for implementing Luther's teaching.

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Briefly Noted

Fortress Introduction to the New Testament. By Gerd Theissen. Trans. John Bowden (Fortress, $19). Theissen's *Introduction* sets the NT books into an historical sequence. He discuses in order the message and career of Jesus, the post-Easter Jesus tradition (logia source and oral tradition), the career of Paul, Paul's letters, the Synoptic Gospels and Acts (second and third generation Christianity), pseudepigraphical letters, and Johannine literature, and concludes with a chapter on the unity of the New Testament. Theissen here traces the development of early Christian literature and the growth of the canon and describes fourteen basic motifs that run through the literature. Written in clear, non-technical language, the book is user-friendly and might well be used as a college text and find a home in a parish library. Every reader will find some things to challenge her or him. I do not agree that Romans is a theological synthesis that serves as Paul's testament to the church. The map on p. xi is useful, but it omits both Philippi and Thessalonica while including less significant sites. The Pauline chronology on p. 57 should give 58–59, not 56–59, for Paul's imprisonment in Rome. All in all, a helpful book. *EK*

The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew. By Miles V. Van Pelt and Gary D. Practico (Zondervan, $16.99). V.P. and P. provide a primary list of 1,903 Hebrew words listed by order of frequency (from 50,524 times to 10 times). Users who learn only the first fifty vocables (items that occur 890 or more times) will recognize 55 percent of the 419,687 words that occur in the Hebrew Bible. Those who master the whole 1,903-word list will recognize 90 percent of the words in the Hebrew Bible. The complete vocabulary of the Old Testament is 8,679 different words. The authors, who have also written a popular beginning textbook, provide a number of other lists (e.g., various kinds of nouns and verbs) that will assist students in memorizing or reviewing. An extremely useful book. *RWK*

In ***101 Questions and Answers on Paul*** (Paulist Press, $16.95) Ronald Witherup provides basic information about Paul's life, ministry, personality, companions, letters, theology, ethics, and later influence. Basic information for the relatively uninformed. Could be useful in a parish library. *EK*

Familiar Stranger: An Introduction to Jesus of Nazareth. By Michael J. McClymond (Eerdmans, $16). McClymond, professor of theological studies at Saint Louis University, has penned an excellent introduction to Jesus. He moves through methodological questions to historical and cultural background and then the life and teaching of Jesus. Though it is a small book, McClymond covers the subject quite well. Few issues regarding Jesus research are left untouched. Many differing opinions and secondary resources are mentioned, though few if any are cited as authoritative. The result is a fine introduction, useful for advanced lay groups, college students, and introductory seminary courses. The author has written a general introduction to Jesus, not a new proposal. As McClymond recognizes, though, it would be impossible to write anything about Jesus without finding there your own faith (p. 139). Yet he manages to avoid any noticeable bias. In fact, to counteract any such bias, in the last chapter, somewhat ironically, he describes some unacceptable, but legitimate, views of Jesus. *Graydon F. Snyder, Chicago, Illinois*

Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today. Edited by Richard N. Longenecker (Hendrickson, $19.95). If you are interested in thoughtful historical and theological reflection on the church but are tired of endless debates on bishops and *satis est*, this volume of essays would be a good place to go. The essays are from various Protestant perspectives, but that does not exclude a wideness of vision. The subject is what has usually been labeled "church order," but the focus is not narrowly on ministry and offices but on all aspects of leadership and structure. After a brief introduction by Longenecker that sets this volume in the history of scholarship, there are twelve essays. Three are on the social context of the early church: Greco-Roman associations, various Jewish manifestations of community, and early Christian architecture. Four essays on the New Testament deal with Jesus, Paul, Acts, and the Pastoral Epistles. Two essays cover leadership structures in the first Christian centuries, in the Latin West and the Greek East. I found the essay by Frances Young on the church in the Greek East to be especially cogent. The volume concludes with three essays on the church today, from an Episcopal, a Presbyterian, and a congregational perspective. One problem is that these latter essays make little attempt to draw on the historical material in the rest of the volume. Although the writers arrive at no consensus, there is a general agreement that the gospel of Christ creates the Christian community, for the purpose of mission. There is also a healthy skepticism about using any reconstructed historical development as in itself normative. Nothing in this volume will resolve current debates among Lutherans about bishops and ministries (in fact, Lutheran perspectives are noticeably absent), but for that very reason these essays may be salutary reading for anyone seriously interested in the study of the church as a concrete community of the gospel. *David W. Kuck, United Theological College, Kingston, Jamaica*

The growth of rhetorical criticism in recent years reawakened interest in rhetoric of the Roman empire. George Kennedy, America's foremost authority on ancient rhetoric, provides accurate, authoritative translations of four handbooks (by

Aelius Theon, Hermogenes, Aphthonius Sophistes, and Nicolaus Sophistes) for the teaching of rhetoric in ***Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*** (Society of Biblical Literature, $29.95). He also translates selections from the commentary on Aphthonius by John of Sardis. Brief introductions to each text and useful notes will aid the reader. A brief index lists some of the rhetorical terms discussed; but there are omissions, e.g., *ekphrasis*, *enkomion*, *sunkrisis*, *thesis*, etc. Many of these texts were not available in any translation before; hence this is a useful text that deserves wide use. *EK*

Carefully examining 1 Cor 1–4 and 9; 2 Cor 2:14–4:6; Paul's use of "I" in Rom 7; Rom 9:1–5, 14:1–15:13 and Acts 17, Mark D. Given argues in ***Paul's True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome*** (Trinity Press International, $26.95) that Paul, much like the Sophists, uses deception, irony, ambiguity, and other rhetorical devices in his argumentation, not surprising because of "Paul's sincere conviction that he knew the Truth and had a divine mandate to promote it in an apocalyptic world filled with deception" (p. 176). By using these devices he combated the deceptive rhetoric of demonic forces that deceive non-Christian Jews, Gentiles, and some "weak" believers. He is close to Plato's Socrates, but with a theological dimension that is not in Plato. This is a highly interesting combination of historical criticism with rhetorical criticism and a form of deconstruction that turns out to be very useful. It is no. 7 of Emory Studies in Early Christianity. I like this work. *EK*

Second Century Christianity: A Collection of Fragments. By Robert M. Grant. Revised and expanded ed. (Westminster John Knox, $19.95). I have owned the first edition of this work since 1949 (it was published in 1945) and consulted it quite often. The revised and expanded edition is partly an advance, partly a step back from the first. It is an advance in including ten texts from classical authors relating to Christianity. It gives texts from eight different early Christian centers, thus recognizing local differences. The section "Identifying Heresy" contains ten anti-heretical texts. Many of these were not in the first edition. But there is also loss. The Marcionite and Anti-Marcionite Prologues, the Muratorian Fragment and the ten-page introduction are no longer there, and the first edition offered more extensive notes and a bibliography of texts and translations. Still, this small collection of translated texts will serve courses in early church history well—even though I will not dispose of the first edition. *EK*

Deuteronomy. The Old Testament Library. By Richard D. Nelson (Westminster John Knox, $44.95). D., formerly of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and now at Perkins, began his scholarly work with an important dissertation on the Deuteronomistic History and has now followed that with significant commentaries in OTL on Joshua and Deuteronomy, and on the books of Kings in *Interpretation*, all three from the same Deuteronomistic school of thought. He traces the origins of Deuteronomy to the first three-quarters of the seventh century because of its acquaintance with the ideas and language of the Assyrian loyalty oath and its connections with the reform of Josiah. Collaborators in its production were aristocratic families, elements of the priesthood, and those schooled in wisdom. Chapters 1–4, 27, and 29–34 are judged to be secondary, as are parts of the other chapters. But N. thinks it is impossible to identify successive layers on redactions in much of the book. Basic themes of Deuteronomy include the centralization of sacrifice, eradication of anything that would compromise a monotheistic understanding of Yahweh, election, humanitarianism, and a legal guide for life in the land. Deuteronomy urges the reader to choose obedience and receive the benefits and blessings that will result. N.'s translation and interpretation are clear, fresh, and to the point. This volume now ranks first, in my judgment, among available full length commentaries on Deuteronomy. *RWK*

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Preaching Helps

Day of Pentecost—Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, Series A

Marking Another Year

Pentecost marks the church's birthday. I write these words on New Year's Day, as the world marks another year of life and history. As these two celebrations, which are normally separated by time, collide in my consciousness, three words dart around my mind. The first two words are *tsunami* and *insurgents*. The third word, the word that connects the first two, is *destruction*.

The evening news reports that an earthquake-triggered tsunami has claimed more than 150,000 lives in South Asia. (As I edit page proofs in late February, the number has climbed to 240,000.) CNN tells us that the death count is incomprehensible. On this day of bowl games, I am mindful that, as an undergraduate, I spent many Saturdays in the fall as one of 108,000+ fans who packed The Big House in Ann Arbor—the football stadium of The University of Michigan. While I would ask you to kindly forgive the sports illustration, my first in over twenty years of preaching and writing, the image of all those fans filling a football stadium and suddenly being washed away transforms the tsunami's numerical death toll from incomprehensible to all too real and all the more devastating.

The new year brought elections to Iraq. Our government assures us that elections will bring democracy. Insurgents promise that elections will bring more killing; their threat is so real that some political parties chose not to participate in the elections. By the time Pentecost rolls around, the new government will be in place. We pray that democracy rather than killing comes to Iraq. As we pray, the names and the faces of soldiers killed in action that many of us watch on television each night, together with the awareness of many more names and faces that we will never see, make the reality of this brand of destruction anything but incomprehensible.

What will the church and its preachers say to a world marking another year of overwhelming death and destruction? After all, this is the real world into which the church is born on Pentecost. For the sake of this world, God gives the church Spirit, speech, boldness, and life. How will we use these gifts in the coming year? What will the church say to the world this Pentecost? How will

we distinguish between the Reign of God and the reign of terror? Many voices are loudly connecting those dots. How will we?

What we say depends, in part, on what the world is talking about. Will *tsunami* and *insurgents* still dart around the world's consciousness come Pentecost, or will words even more death-dealing and destructive occupy our minds? But there is a core concern that the world wants addressed, an urgent message that the world yearns to hear. This concern transcends circumstance; the message cuts to the heart of the matter. Confronted by change—global and local, individual and communal, great and small—our notions of God's nature, God's future, and our role in that future are often threatened. (For more on this, see my *When God Speaks through Change* [Alban Institute, 2005], 13.) People's beliefs become unstable as they question how a loving God can allow evil to exist. They want to know where God is in this mess and what God is doing about it.

Emboldened by the Spirit, God calls the church out of its buildings to proclaim to the world that tsunami and insurgents, death and destruction, are not God's will and plan for the world. As I contemplate the church's mission, for me Jesus' instruction to "make disciples" (Mt 28:19) pales in importance to Jesus' instruction to tell people, "The kingdom of God has come near to you" (Lk 10:9). Though I found it difficult as a pastor to go "cold calling" in order to invite potential new members to join my congregation, I could get excited about celebrating Pentecost as part of a group that takes to the streets to tell our neighbors that earthquakes and suicide bombs are not the world that God intends. Rather than an indication of God's will, rather than part of some divine plan, death and destruction are contrary to God. When destruction strikes in ways both unimagined and all too familiar, God meets us in the worst of it and weeps with us. And rather than explaining it away, as if death and destruction always happen for a reason, God's response is victory. God brings new life. In the end, destruction does not win. Jesus does.

Terry C. Graunke, a mission developer in Central Point, Oregon (outside Medford), spends his days knocking on doors in order to tell people what God is doing in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pastor Graunke invites us to trust Jesus' promise—"I am with you always"—and preach boldly about the God who drives chaos away. Tell about the God who can and does bind up the broken, forgive, and restore relationships. Take a risk and share the promise of Jesus with another outside your present fellowship so that you might be amazed by the power of Jesus' promise.

Pastor Graunke received his M.Div from Seminex in 1978 and was ordained in 1980. He served as associate pastor of Bethany, Indianapolis, and pastor of two parishes in Michigan, as well as congregations in Florissant, Missouri, and

Carbondale, Illinois. He served on synod social ministry committees and as a leader in CROP throughout his ministry, in large part because of his deep interest and commitment to world hunger issues and the fight against hunger. He is married to Barbara. They are the parents of four daughters and two sons and grandparents of twins. I am delighted to vicariously accompany this mission developer as he goes door to door and, in the Spirit of Pentecost, brings the gospel out of the house and into the streets.

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Day of Pentecost
May 15, 2005

Acts 2:1–21
Psalm 104:25–35, 37
1 Corinthians 12:3b–11
John 20:19–23

First Reading

In the Prayer of the Day we ask God to "Open our hearts to the power of the Spirit." What does it mean to be "filled with the Holy Spirit"? Judging from parallel texts cited in Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (p. 323), one could deduce that being filled with the Holy Spirit means especially having the power to speak the Word of God boldly in the face of opposition (see Acts 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9, 52; 19:6). In Luke's narrative of Pentecost all of the gathered disciples, not just Peter, are filled with the Holy Spirit. Speech comes pouring out of them, speech given by the Spirit. Luke would have us believe that what they speak is not their own, but they speak "just as the Spirit was giving to them to declare boldly." It's a gift, this speech of Peter, this "boldness" of the disciples. After all, had they not all been "together in one place"? It's as if this mighty wind had blown them apart.

Paul worked to build a community of Jesus in Corinth. Communication flowed back and forth between apostle and "congregation." Reading the letter, one can recognize that Paul was concerned with factions in the church. The problem was so great that some had taken pride in claiming Apollos, some Peter (Cephas), some Paul, some Christ (1:12) as spiritual leader. Paul knew that, while the gifts are diverse, one Spirit unifies the church, makes it one body.

Jesus and his opponents, "the Jews," kept trading barbs at the Feast of Tabernacles (booths), a harvest festival. It was also known as the Feast of Weeks, seven weeks after Passover. The festival celebrated the Torah, but its roots were agricultural (Lev 23:15–21; Deut 16:9). Many, many pilgrims were in the city for the festival. Prayers for rain were a part of this feast, and its high point was the "pouring of water from Siloam pool with a golden pitcher" (A. M. Hunter, *John* [Cambridge Bible Com-

mentary, 1965], 84). Jesus assumed the place of the source of water. From him "living water" would come. (Moses had once received God's gift of "running water" from a rock, despite his initial unbelief, Num 20:1–17). The fourth evangelist explains that by "living water" Jesus meant "the Spirit." Scripture, Jesus, and Spirit are held together tightly here, the Scripture "testifying to Jesus," according to John.

Pastoral Reflection

"What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit"? Like you, I'll bet, people have accused me also of being "full of it." Usually, they aren't talking about the Holy Spirit. However, as a mission developer, I have come to understand that, indeed, God has given me the Holy Spirit. You, too!

Back in September of 2003, my second month in this call, after I had become somewhat familiar with the city, met the police chief, mayor, and other authorities, I put my key in the ignition one day and headed out to the first subdivision, where I began initial calling, ringing doorbells and knocking on the doors of total strangers, inviting them to become involved in a "new thing," the beginning of a new congregation. When I parked the car in a corner of the subdivision, I prayed . . . and prayed . . . and prayed, because I really did not know how to do this work, despite four days of training by the ELCA Division for Outreach.

I soon learned, however, that I was not alone. I could speak "as the Spirit was giving me to declare boldly." Door to door I went, not meeting much success as the world measures success but growing in faith and trust and even in confidence. For me it doesn't "get easier with practice." Perhaps this is true for you, too. What is easier is that I know I am not alone. (Neither are you, nor your people). We have been washed in the "living water" of God's promise. We are joined together with God's people as one, strong Body. We dare to speak, and we are bold to speak because the Spirit of God gives us the will and the words! TCG

Holy Trinity
May 22, 2005

Genesis 1:1–2:4a
Psalm 8
2 Corinthians 13:11–13
Matthew 28:16–20

First Reading

One is struck by the order that God's Word, "Let there be," brings to an "earth without form and void," or, perhaps better, "chaos." For the ancient Semitic world, of course, this watery chaos was the home of the great sea monster, the forces of death and destruction. What comes after God speaks is not only order . . . evening and morning, the first day, . . . the second day, . . . the third day, . . . and so on, but light, light that "shines in the darkness," to quote from John 1, light "which darkness cannot overcome." Genesis 1 is Priestly material from the time of exile, a time of chaos, rootlessness, and displacement. All is not chaos, however. Yahweh God is Creator. Yahweh brings light even to exiles buried deep in Babylon's chaos. God will bring life to their mere existence, light where now there is darkness.

The writer of 2 Corinthians closes the letter with what we have come to call the "Trinitarian Benediction." The writer's prayer is that God's grace may continue within the young community. God's love for the Corinthians, if they will see it, was given most clearly in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and so also given to us. Will we recognize that?

There is much doubt as to whether Jesus ever spoke the words attributed to Him by the writer of Matthew's Gospel in "the Great Commission." The full "Trinitarian formula," which, most likely, makes this text the choice for Trinity Sunday, is a later development of the New Testament church. At least that seems to be the prevailing consensus. However, "prevailing consensus" notwithstanding, our Lord here has given his disciples of every time and place a task. We who confess the Trinity and who acknowledge that "all authority in heaven and on earth" have been given to Jesus are called to "Go and make disciples." That is task enough for a lifetime—and doesn't leave us much time for speculative discussions about the nature of the Trinity.

Pastoral Reflections

What to do about the Trinity. What can one say about the Trinity? Last Sunday we celebrated the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. That "rush of mighty wind" and those "tongues of fire" moved the apostles to speak boldly about Jesus.

Can we do the same on Trinity Sunday, even when we can't begin to understand the Trinity? Just try mulling over the Athanasian Creed for a while. Better yet, preach boldly about the God who drives chaos away. This God can and does bind up the broken. This God can and does forgive sin and restore relationships. This God can and does bring people together in a "fellowship of the Holy Spirit." The claim of Israel (and our claim) is that God is the One responsible for creation, for its beauty, order, and life-sustaining goodness.

"Some doubted," Matthew says, as the disciples saw Jesus on that mountain in Galilee. Sometimes we have doubted, and we have our days still—believe me, I do, as a mission developer going door to door, inviting people to come and experience God's love and fellowship in a new Lutheran community of faith—but our doubts do not disqualify us from the commission to "Go, and make disciples." Indeed, we also hear that word of special assurance, "*I am with you always*"—the word which has "Lo" before it for special emphasis (see Matt 1:23; 18:20 as well as here in 28:20). The Old Testament people of God knew that as their army went into battle, as long as Yahweh was "with them" they would emerge victorious. Jesus gives that same assurance to his disciples through the ages, yes, even to us. So I can go door to door, hearing indifference, apathy, once in a while even hostile rejection, but be sure that on my way some will hear and receive the message.

Take a risk. Share the promise of Jesus with another outside your present fellowship. You may be amazed at the power of the promise, "I am with you." TCG

Second Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 4) May 29, 2005

Deuteronomy 11:18–21, 26–28
Psalm 31:1–5, 19–24
Romans 1:16–17, 3:22b–28 (29–31)
Matthew 7:21–29

First Reading

In the Prayer of the Day we affirm that God has "revealed Your will to Your people and promised to help us all." Then we formally and directly ask, "Help us to hear and do what You command. . . ."

God had some "helps" for Israel: (1) "Wear "headbands," phylacteries, with the words of the Law written upon them; (2) Teach the words of the Law constantly to children, each generation learning from the one preceding; (3) Write the words of the

Law on the doorposts of Israelite homes. In other words, make them visible, plain, and a priority. That's because there was only one choice. Israel faced either blessings or curse for its obedience or disobedience.

Paul's primary subject in Romans is "the righteousness of God." Romans 1:16–17 was for Martin Luther a key text. Interpreters battle over whether *ek piteous* goes with *dikaios* or with *zesetai*. The passage is quoting the prophet Habakkuk, and Habakkuk was calling for faithful obedience and patience in the face of threat. Paul uses the prophet's words to argue that God's righteousness is God's saving power, God's will to save. The Good News of Jesus' victory over sin and death is the Word that brings saving grace to all, whether Jew or Greek. Far from being something of which to be ashamed, the cross of Jesus brings life to all.

Jesus warns in his final words of the "Sermon on the Mount" that not mere confession with lips, "Lord, Lord," merits the kingdom. Jesus is concerned about those who act as well as confess. One can build on sand and slide into the sea, or one can build on a firm foundation and stand against many threats. The one who hears (*akouein*) *and* does (*poiein*) Jesus' words has built on solid rock.

Pastoral Reflections

Much debate and discussion has taken place over public display of the Ten Commandments. Moses is clearly on the side of the Alabama judge who fought so hard in that state's Supreme Court for public display. Moses' intent, it seems, was to keep God's Torah ("Law," also read "words of life") in front of the people. The theory was, I guess, "If they see them, they will do them."

Israel had seen God's great deliverance at the Red Sea, but she still fashioned another image at the time Moses went up the mountain at Sinai. Jesus is right. It's very easy to say, "Lord, Lord," but obeying the will of God is another matter. Matthew's community, it seems, saw many "charismatic Christians," people of special dedication who were both able to do powerful deeds and admired by many in the community. Matthew argues, however, that miracles and special gifts are not necessarily proofs of faithfulness. One's faith can be accurately measured not from top down but from bottom up. The house built on sand collapses. The person rooted in Jesus stands despite every threat.

Display of the commandments may be important (surely, teaching the commandments generation to generation is!), but acting with love and mercy, the foundations of the commandments, is the real test. Through Matthew's Gospel and in our sermon today Jesus calls for integrity. "Help us to do what You command." "The righteous shall live by faith," and "faith is active in love." TCG

Third Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 5) June 5, 2005

Hosea 5:15–6:6
Psalm 50:7–15
Romans 4:13–25
Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26

First Reading

We can hear both the anger and the sorrow in the voice of Yahweh in Hosea's oracle (5:15–6:6). What Abraham Heschel described as "pathos" is clearly visible in the words of Yahweh through the prophet, perhaps more visible here than in any other prophetic passage. Scorned by Israel, which had turned to Assyria for security, Yahweh's anger boils over. God will be "like a lion" and "tear them to pieces," then "retire,"

literally "turn again to my place." Yahweh will *shuv* ("return") until the people *shuv* ("return"), that is, confess and *repent*. The basis of repentance for Israel is God's grace, sure as the spring rains, which come every year to water the land. However, repentance and forgiveness ought to bring both praise and "knowledge of the Lord" (6:3). This is clearly covenant language, and it is Hosea's favorite way of describing the relationship between Yahweh and Israel.

Paul insists that Law and Promise must be distinguished. "Abraham received God's promise not by the Law, but by faith." Abraham knew his impotence, and he was uncircumcised when God first came to him with the promise of many descendants. It was not because of anything that Abraham had done that God favored him. However, Abraham trusted God's promise in the face of the truth of his human weakness, and his faith received the heir, the fulfillment of the promise.

The story of Matthew's call is a "paradigm for Jesus' mission" (Mark Allan Powell, *God With Us* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995], 14). Jesus calls sinners to repent and "follow me." In Jesus God's mercy resides, and God desires "mercy and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6). At "the house" (Matthew's? Jesus'?) Jesus eats with other tax collectors and sinners. By doing so, he breaks through the strongest barrier in all of Hebrew life. He dares to reach out to the unclean! The righteous have no need to hear Jesus' call. Jesus is calling *sinners* to repent and turn to the Lord.

Pastoral Reflections

Dinner etiquette does not carry the same weight in our society that it did for Jesus. Or does it? Who is invited to our "banquet tables"? Do we entertain only "family members," or do we serve all who seek God's grace? The religion of Jesus is a religion of joy! Jesus is "the Bridegroom" (Matt 25:1) at whose presence all rejoice and feast!

In Jesus God calls sinners to a banquet. *Kalein* is used also in Matt 22:3, 4, 8, 9 of inviting guests to a banquet. The word expresses the generosity of God, the God who cares even for sinners, even a tax collector, a traitor, and a cheat. In fact, Jesus has already told his followers that "Many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 8:11). The heavenly banquet is not "for Hebrews only" (nor "for Lutherans only," nor for the ritually clean only).

One of the core themes of mission development in the ELCA is that no developer is looking to "convert" Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, members of the UCC, Missouri Synod Lutherans, or any other Christians. When I knock on the door or ring a doorbell, I invite all, but I am most concerned for the unchurched. I want to connect with people who do not know Jesus.

That may make worship a lot tougher—take more teaching, more patience, and more creativity—but it's the unchurched, those who do not know the Lord, those who may have fallen away from the church, that we are after as "mission developers" (and don't kid yourselves; we are all "mission developers"). Look at the ones with whom Jesus dined—tax collectors, outcasts, untouchables. Jesus comes to eat with us, too, and our "friends." For Jesus is the Friend of sinners. TCG

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 6) June 12, 2005

Exodus 19:2–8a
Psalm 100
Romans 5:1–8
Matthew 9:35–10:8 (9–23)

First Reading

Lester Meyer notes that in this text Israel "arrives at the place which is the setting for the rest of Exodus" (*Exodus* [Augsburg, 1983], 113ff.). That place, of course, is the "holy mountain" where God had led God's people. Here, at Sinai, Yahweh puts forward both promise and command. Promise: You shall be "my treasured possession" (NRSV). Command: ". . . obey my voice and keep my covenant."

The call to be Yahweh's "treasured possession" is undergirded by the gospel message at the very beginning of Yahweh's call to Israel, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians . . ." (see *With One Voice* #770). The gospel is clearly the foundation for Israel's vocation—"priestly kingdom," "holy nation." While Yahweh's grace in rescuing Israel is the motivation for all of Israel's life, that life of thanksgiving, priesthood, intercession, and service to others is the pattern for "holy living."

Paul also talks lavishly about the gospel. His image is not the exodus from Egypt but the death of Jesus for the "ungodly," those who have no fear or awe in the face of God. If God can give God's only Son for those set against God, those who have no respect for God, then what will those "saved" do with the "peace" that has been given them? Jesus has given us "access." What will we do with that "access"?

Jesus calls twelve. These "special" twelve certainly have "access." They are even named by the writer of Matthew's Gospel. With access comes responsibility, a commission. Jesus seems to answer his own prayer (9:38) by sending out the twelve. He has specific instructions for them. In his steps they walk, and, as they walk, they are to act with "compassion" (9:36), that is, they are to "suffer with" those they serve—"get into their shoes," a modern idiom might say.

Pastoral Reflections

So you want to be a "church worker"? Or, perhaps, you "simply" want to be a Christian, a follower, one who walks in the steps of Christ. If you do, be ready to take the blessing "special people," "treasured possession"—however you want to translate the Hebrew of Exodus 19:5—seriously.

I remember the transition from high school to college. I had worked very hard in high school, National Honor Society and all that. Still, I wasn't sure I was ready for college. The library and its contents became special friends very fast. Although the Lord had blessed me with intellect, dedication to my school work, and many gifted teachers and friends, the challenge of college classes was still great, and the step from high school to college immense.

Like many other somewhat intimidated college freshmen, I made it through school, into seminary, through that curriculum, and on to parish ministry. Thank God for "continuing education" in the "ELCA as well!

The "education" begins, however, in baptism, which connects us to Jesus and his death "for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6). It begins in God's call to be God's "special people." "Special" has many connotations for people today. From Exodus and much of the Old Testament, however, the one meaning that stands out is that "special people" bear great responsibility. As we live out our "specialness," our "treasuredness," that responsibility has to come through. It is the

ultimate privilege to bear that responsibility as God's "special people." Like "the father of Israel," Abraham, we have been "blessed to be a blessing." TCG

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 7) June 19, 2005

Jeremiah 20:7–13
Psalm 69:8–11 (12–17), 18–20
Romans 6:1b–11
Matthew 10:24–39

First Reading

On this Sunday we pray, ". . . rescue your people from despair; deliver your sons and daughters from fear, and preserve us all from unbelief." There is despair in abundance in Jeremiah's complaint! In fact, the prophet cries out in lament, "O Lord, You seduced me, and I was seduced" (20:7). Yahweh's call had caused Jeremiah derision and abuse. He had become an "unmentionable." It wasn't fair! Jeremiah experienced bouts of paranoia (20:10, "I hear many whispering, 'Terror is all around. Denounce him.'"). Jeremiah felt that Yahweh "set him up." How often do the people of God feel that way in a world where evil is still active?

Paul had just explained how in "one man" (Jesus), many will be declared righteous, even as, through "one man" (Adam), all had sinned. In other words, Paul had just set out the "freedom of the Christian" and then asked a logical question: "Should we continue sinning so that God's grace may continue to flow?" It sounds perfectly logical. You want more grace, you sin some more. Then Paul answers with a decisive "*me genoito*," literally, "It must not happen!" Better, "No way!"

Baptism makes all the difference. Baptism connects us intimately to Jesus. Jesus' death becomes our death to sin. Jesus' resurrection becomes our resurrection to new life. Far from continuing to sin, we are called "dead to sin." Instead, we are very much alive in Christ. God's love abounds in us.

In Matthew 10 Jesus sends his disciples out to be his witnesses. They are to be fearless preachers, ready to confess. After all, God protects tiny sparrows, the cheapest of birds in the marketplace. Certainly God will watch over the messengers of his Messiah!

Pastoral Reflections

Jeremiah bemoans his status as prophet, calling himself a "laughingstock." Jesus puts his disciples on notice that on the question of his authenticity the world is divided. In Matt 10:34–39 we find some of the hardest words in the Gospel. Moreover, Matthew does not talk about the disciples' return from their assigned mission.

If we, who are "professional proclaimers," walk into the pulpit sometimes trembling and unsure, imagine what the task of witness must be for our lay folk. Jesus' words lay out a line of demarcation between the world and the Word. He comes bringing a sword, and when one swings a sword, division takes place. People scatter, and they come down on one side of the sword or the other.

When one is developing a new mission, when one engages in many, many initial calls, any weapon one can find is welcome. The promises of God—the "gospel of the Lord"—is the most comforting thing I know. "Lord, I do not know how to speak, but give me the words, and I will proclaim." There have been mornings I've sat in the car on the edge of some subdivision, waiting and praying for inspiration and strength to speak. I have found that the best way to find that

strength and inspiration is to just pray and get about the task of inviting. After the first five doorbells have been rung the job gets easier, even if there is some harsh rejection (an extremely rare occurrence).

Then we realize that "even the hairs of your head are all counted." God is with us. Then there is no fear or hesitation. We all ought to try it! And trust! TCG

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 8) June 26, 2005

Jeremiah 28:5–9
Psalm 89:1–4, 15–18
Romans 6:12–23
Matthew 10:40–42

First Reading

Again the Prayer of the Day sets the tone with the words, "You have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding." That is a statement of trust in the promises of the Lord.

Jeremiah had heard the prophet Hananiah's promising words. True to his name, Hananiah promised God's favor for the nation. The people and sacred vessels of Israel, Hananiah said, would return to Jerusalem. The exile was to end soon.

Jeremiah hoped that Hananiah's words were true, but the track record of Israel's prophets of prosperity was not in Hananiah's favor. Only when hopeful prophetic words came true could God's people know a true prophet of hope.

The Romans text continues Paul's argument concerning the change in those who have been claimed by God's Spirit. Because Jesus died for sinners, sin cannot "dominate," lord it over, God's people. Freedom has come to the believer in Christ. Sin brought "wages," and wages are earned. But because of the death of Jesus believers have received a "gift" from God—eternal life.

The theme of the conclusion of Jesus' commissioning speech to his disciples is "welcome." The "little ones" are believers, neophytes in the faith. Whoever welcomes one of these believers welcomes Jesus, and a "reward" awaits that person. The reward is the opportunity to be present with the Lord himself. The cup of cold water will grow into much more than a drink. The one who gives such will find him/herself at the heavenly banquet.

Pastoral Reflections

These texts emphasize the "gift" of God's grace. Words that proclaim salvation, "good times," are to be weighed carefully against historical events, but, more importantly, against Yahweh's demands in the law and "track record" in the gospel. "Cheap grace" is not what God is about. Indeed, Paul makes clear, God's gift cost God dearly. The gift of God is "in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

Paul describes our condition as "slavery." We don't allow slavery in our culture any longer. We have abolished that ancient practice. However, freedom did not come cheap! Some historians would argue that it took the bloodiest war in American history to put an end to the practice. Not cheap for God, either: Jesus had to die to end our slavery.

Now, however, we are free to serve in thanksgiving for God's great love and Jesus' ultimate sacrifice. When we do so, there may be times when the Good News we know to be true, that Christ died for our sins and was raised for our justification, is just too good for some to believe. "How can this be? God, almighty God, cares about me?" Yes, God does, and his love and mercy are wonderful!

We had better be open and liberal in welcoming others to our fellowship. You never really know who is knocking at the door, who has come this Sunday, trying to "fit in," trying to overcome guilt or pain or hurt while at the same time trying to grasp the liturgy, pray with the fellowship, eat and drink at the table. Could she/he be Jesus? TCG

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost July 3, 2005

Zechariah 9:9–12
Psalm 145:8–15
Romans 7:15–25a
Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30

First Reading

The King of Peace comes, riding on a donkey. There is hope for a recovery in Israel, led by a "Son of David." He will bring peace to Israel, to the nations. Zion will see God's salvation, a double restoration! Zechariah spoke in a world dominated by traditional Israelite enemies. It was a time of uncertainty and upheaval. With hope nowhere in sight, Zechariah nevertheless saw the vision of peace.

Paul knows that although the intellect may confess Jesus as Lord and acknowledge God as the Giver of every good gift, the "flesh," what Luther called the "old Adam," desires its own glorification and gratification. Often temptations and our own desires overcome intellect and will (every good intention). We give in to temptation. We break God's commands. We don't do the good we desire. We bring death upon ourselves.

With some people you just can't win. John the Baptist's opponents accused him of being demon-possessed because of his asceticism and ruddy appearance as well as his diet and "hangout." Jesus' opponents accused him of being a glutton and a drunkard because he enjoyed feasting (with the "wrong" kind of people). Jesus invites all to experience the peace (the "rest") that comes from taking his yoke. After all, a yoke was built for two, and, you see, Jesus has fulfilled the law.

Pastoral Reflections

Jesus brings freedom. These lessons are clear on that premise. The Hebrew leaders weren't sure freedom was a good thing; at the very least, too much freedom can destroy a person. Israel looked for a humble, victorious warrior. Would that our modern athletes or generals might display that combination! Jesus fulfilled that prophecy in his day, riding into Jerusalem in peace, as the evangelists tell us in the Passion narrative.

Yet Jesus brought much controversy, even as he does today. In this (for me) new community in southern Oregon, the clergy of the local ministerial association are divided on the question of marriage to the point that a "marriage policy" cannot be formulated. (I doubt whether a "who was Jesus" statement could be formulated, either!)

More to the point, Christians of many persuasions and nuances try to reconcile Jesus, friend of sinners, to Jesus, sinless Son of God. Which Jesus is authentic? Can both portraits really exist in the same person? Does Jesus bring too much freedom? What does Jesus' "easy yoke" mean for us who are called to welcome all to our sanctuaries and the Lord's Table every week? If he welcomes them, who are we to stand in the way? How "easy" is easy? TCG

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.

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