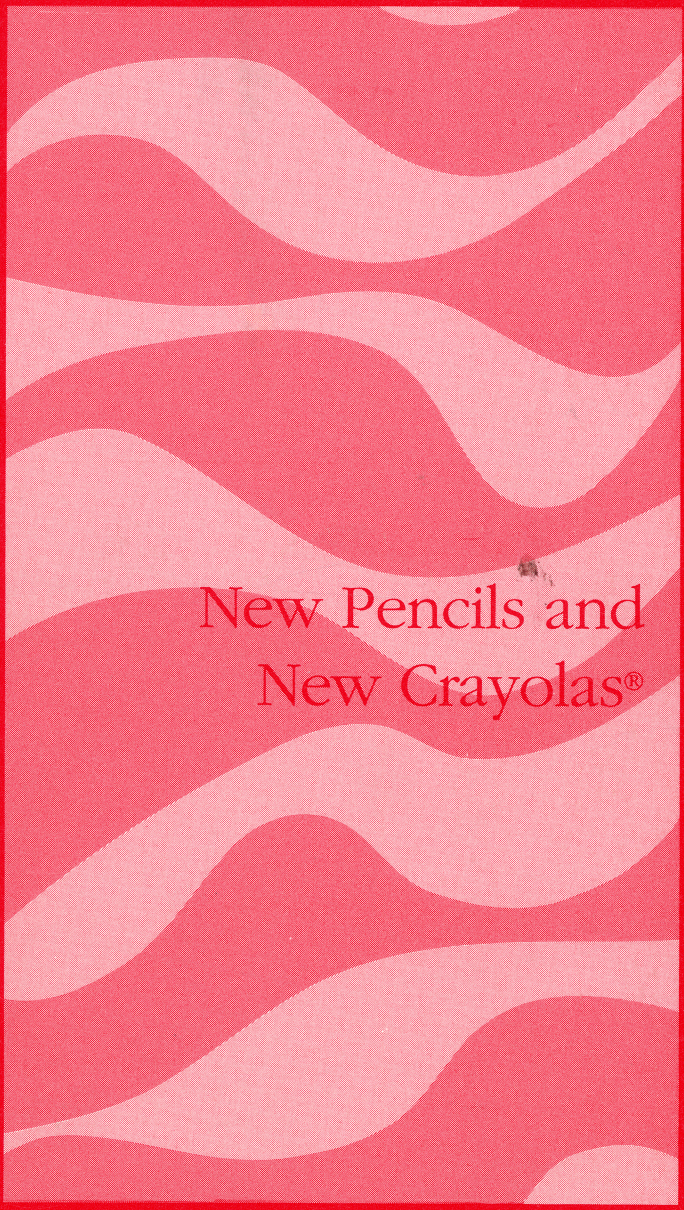
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Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
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Editor: **Ralph W. Klein**
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
rklein@lstc.edu
Associate Editor: **Norma Cook Everist**
Wartburg Theological Seminary
Assistant Editor: **Peggy B. Eldredge**
peldredg@lstc.edu
Editor of Preaching Helps: **Robert H. Smith**
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Rsmith@plts.edu
Editors of Book Reviews:
Edgar Krentz
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (773/256-0752)
ekrentz@lstc.edu
Kathleen Billman
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (773/256-0721)
kbillman@lstc.edu
Craig L. Nessan
Wartburg Theological Seminary (319/589-0212)
clnessan@aol.com
Circulation office: 773/256-0751
currents@lstc.edu

Editorial Board: **Paul G. Bieber, Mary R. Bischoff, Jan Wiersma Halverson, Connie Kleingartner, Randall R. Lee, Richard L. Ramirez, Susan Rippert, Barbara Rossing, Mary C. Vance-Welsh, Vicki Watkins, Fritz Wehrenberg, Vítor Westhelle, Mark Wilms.**

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Contents

New Pencils and New Crayolas® 418
Ralph W. Klein

Marriage as a Religious and a Legal Concept 421
Christian Albrecht

Luther on Gender Relations—Just One Reading of Genesis? 424
Christoph Bultmann

Windows on Life—Women after the Reformation 429
Ute Mennecke-Haustein

Martin Luther and Female Education 437
Andrea Schulte

The Church and Same-Sex Relationships: A Case Study in Hermeneutical Ecology 440
John Rollefson

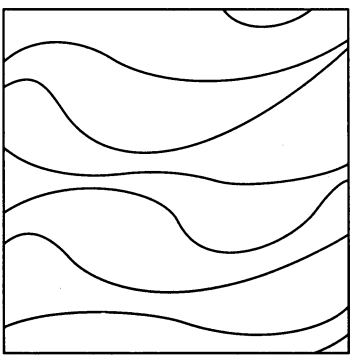
"Blessed Are They upon God's Holy Mountain": Reflections on Luke 6:17–26 452
David Berg

Stewardship and War's Collateral Damage 456
Jerry L. Schmalenberger

Book Reviews 460

Volume 29 Index 496

Drawings by Jack Eldredge



Preaching Helps 480

Four Gospels, Three Years
Robert H. Smith

Ash Wednesday—Good Friday, Series B
Contributor: Herb Spomer

New Pencils and New Crayolas®

I write these words at the beginning of another academic year, and I am reminded of different times in my life and in society, when life was simpler, family resources quite limited, and the beginning of the "academic year" in first or second grade was marked by the newness and freshness—and affordableness—of pencils and Crayolas. A lot of "grades" have flown by in the nearly six decades since I forged those memories. This year I bought a new computer instead of the pencils and Crayolas to celebrate the new academic year. September still has that same old magic for me, as it did when Mrs. Colvin was my teacher and knickers my uniform.

Life really was probably not so simple then—people were searching for meaning and striving to be faithful then too, against all the odds. But it *seems* so much simpler. Back then we stood up to sing the "Battle Hymn of the Reformation." Today we stand up for all the hymns and wouldn't be caught dead talking about the "battle hymn" of the Reformation. Today we assess the positive—and negative—effects of the Reformation on women, discuss issues of sexuality unmentioned then (the fierce sexual debate then was about dancing!), and our country considers toppling militarily the leader of another sovereign state (World War II, at least in retrospect, was a lot simpler ethically).

The first four articles in this issue were delivered at a conference in Germany dealing with the impact of the Reformation on the role of women. **Christian Albrecht** shows how the role of women after the Reformation was enhanced by a changed legal concept of marriage. While the medieval church encouraged a form of marriage based on mutual consent, the church's stress on the superiority of the celibate life had a devaluating effect on the religious understanding of marriage. Luther argued that the marital relationship between a man and a woman was true chastity and of higher value than monastic asceticism, just as one's daily work represents true worship of God and was to be more highly valued than monastic life with its seclusion. The concept of marriage was grounded in the functions it fulfills; the sacramental view is replaced by a functional view. The pragmatic justification of marriage was to the advantage of those traditionally less privileged in marriage, namely, women.

Christoph Bultmann assesses what the Reformation had to contribute to the relationship of men and women by focusing on Luther's interpretation of Genesis 1–3. He notes that at one time Genesis was understood as the last word on when and how the world was made and on the relation of men and women. He notes that neither opinion should hold sway today. Luther's exegesis reduces woman's role to the bearing and raising of children, and he stresses explicitly the subordi-

nation of women in a way that is not counterbalanced even by the aspect of mutual love as it is in Ephesians. Luther's preoccupation with the problem of monastic vows and other similar issues of the day prevented him from fully realizing the consequences of what he himself pointed out in his exposition of passages like 1 Corinthians 7. Hence we need to move beyond Luther's own biased interpretation of Genesis to the biblical text itself to find a more wholesome picture of the role of sexuality in general and of women in particular.

Ute Mennecke-Haustein reviews the positions of Luther and Caritas Pirckheimer in the sixteenth century on why one should leave a convent or remain in a convent. A widow by the name of Ursula Tetzel tried to free her daughter Margarete from a convent where Caritas Pirckheimer was the abbess, and she eventually succeeded with the help of political authorities, who based their opinion on the fourth commandment—the daughter who was a nun should obey her mother. Luther argued that God gave humans an irresistible sexual drive in order to maintain the species and to subdue the flesh so that it does not "rage wherever and however it pleases." While Luther argued for freedom to get married, some of his followers concluded that marriage was an obligation—one ought to be married. Two kinds of freedom were at stake in the debate: freedom from sensuality through asceticism and freedom from the agonies of conscience through the discovery that one's natural condition of sexuality was in accordance with the will of the creator. Still, the aspect of personal freedom and self-determination was not what lay at the heart of the debate about life in a convent or in marriage. A number of feminist critics have called into question the idea that the Reformation contributed to the emancipation of women. For them the ideal of personal independence is not met by the Reformation's understanding of marriage. Is what we are doing now better than what they were doing then?

Andrea Schulte notes the importance of education in the program initiated by the Lutheran reformers. They stressed education so that people would better understand the faith, and the responsibility for education devolved on the home, the church, and the state. Luther advocated education for girls, at least in a limited fashion, since its purposes were limited to deepening in the faith and preparation for domestic activities. In his view only men should be offered higher education. Because of their education women in the Reformation era were active participants in the life of the church, including doctrinal debates. The heritage of an emphasis on education, however limited such education was for women, should motivate us to engage further in debates about the opportunities and limitations of education.

John Rollefson writes about the discussion on homosexuality in his congregation that has a special hermeneutical ecology because of the open presence of gays and lesbians in the congregation. He also believes that wisdom theology urges human beings to make ethical decisions by paying attention to science and

human experiences. Our hearing of Scripture does not occur apart from our empirical location. Experience and other empirical realities are not separate sources of authority within the church, but they contribute to the creation of the hermeneutical lens. The author used this approach to discuss the Yahwist's version of creation in Genesis 2 in two small groups in his congregation, one heterosexual and one homosexual. Much of the focus was on Yahweh's judgment: "It is not good that the man should be alone." The article shares the wide-ranging thoughts evoked by this story, including the idea that on a university campus it's easier to be accepted as a lesbian than as a Christian. All this is related to a novel by Charles Baxter, *The Feast of Love*, and the proposal that theological anthropology involves the personal stories of love and human relationships as experienced and interpreted in the light of Scripture's master story. Paul Lehmann wrote: "What the text says does not yet tell us what it teaches; that happens only when the text is perceived from some angle of vision." I suspect readers may struggle with the role played by experience in this article, and this struggle may be a worthwhile end in itself. As the ELCA continues the church-wide discussion of sexuality and homosexuality in the years ahead, *Currents* intends to publish a wide variety of views on all sides of this question.

David Berg preached a stirring sermon on the Beatitudes as he reflected on his visit by bus to an African village. He takes note of his "privileged" life and the generosity, hospitality, and celebration—amid indescribable poverty and hunger—of their Christian hosts. But to learn more about the mixture of haunting, unpleasant, and ugly images and images of unparalleled beauty and breath-taking greatness, you'll have to read the sermon.

At the height of the U. S. attack on Afghanistan, **Jerry L. Schmalenberger** sent in his reflections on stewardship—in the context of war. We do not actually own anything; we just look after it for the next generation. Rarely during warfare do we consider the stewardship of natural resources, human lives, social programs, and the cost to future generations. The stewardship implications are huge when we calculate in war's collateral damage for years to come.

This summer I visited my brother, nine years my elder and locked in the impenetrable darkness of Alzheimer's disease. No sentence he attempted made it clear through to a period at the end. He accepted my presence as if we were supposed to converse, but with no obvious indication that he knew at all who I was or even who he was. Life for him has become absolutely simple as it has become incredibly complicated for his spouse and family. Childhood delights in new pencils and new Crayolas are now tinged with sadness and the experience of the toughness of life, but bolstered nonetheless by our uncommon hope in the One who still promises to make all things new.

Ralph W. Klein, Editor

Marriage as a Religious and a Legal Concept

Christian Albrecht
University of Erfurt (Germany)

It may be surprising when, in my contribution to the debate about women after the Reformation, I focus on the institution of marriage or, to be more precise, on the religious and legal understanding of marriage. However, it is my conviction that the Reformation brought about a threefold change in the perception of women, thereby starting a process which has neither lost its significance nor yet come to completion. The first aspect is the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which implies an enhanced religious competence of women. The second aspect is the abolition of celibacy in the Protestant church, which led to the construction of a new model, namely, the family of a pastor in which the pastor's wife plays an enhanced role in the house and especially in the education of children. The third aspect is that of a new understanding of a woman as a partner in marriage, and this is due to a changed legal concept of marriage. I mainly want to address this last point, for here we can gain a distinct understanding of the social and cultural consequences of the Reformation for the self-understanding of women and their real options for life in society.

I suggest a simple proposition: The Reformation brought into line the secular practice and the religious interpretation of marriage. I develop this proposition in three steps. First, I show that a problematic tension had arisen in the pre-Reformation period between the secular practice and the religious concept of marriage. Second, I identify the main arguments that the Reformers, and Luther in particular, used in order to defuse this tension. Third, I look at the consequences and limits of this conceptual modification.

Medieval Catholicism

We need to remind ourselves that the medieval church contributed greatly to the establishment of marriage as a legal institution. The eleventh and twelfth centuries saw the founding of cities at an increasing pace. This was mainly based on the economic conditions of craftsmen, merchants, and farmers. Within this social context, and especially since the fourteenth century, a legally concluded marriage no longer remained the privilege of the nobility. Instead, it became possible to enter into marriage on an economic basis provided by trade and farming. Thus, certain sections of the population, which so far had not been able to marry, acquired the right to become independent from extended households and could set up their own households. (This process eventually contributed to the evolution of early modern society.) The medieval church supported this development by encouraging a form of marriage based on

mutual consent. The legal status of marriage no longer depended on a permission to marry from parents or overlords. Rather, an agreement between a bride and a groom was sufficient for the validity of a marriage. The main purpose of ecclesiastical support for marriage by consent was to prevent the disorder of illegitimate cohabitation. At the same time, however, the church effectively made it easier for men and women to enter into a legally recognized relationship and to have legally recognized, i.e. legitimate, children. The medieval church basically contributed to the establishment of marriage as a widespread and reliable legal institution.

Hand in hand with this establishment of marriage went the church's vigorous enforcement of celibacy on the clergy and its emphasis on a qualitative difference between clerical or monastic life and married life. The status of the clergy was regarded as an outstanding status and more pleasing to God than any other form of noncelibate and noncontinent life among the laity. What had started as the promotion of a process of modernization led to an impasse with the separation between marriage as a legal institution and cultural practice on the one hand, and the devaluating religious understanding of marriage on the other. Another conflict resulted from the indissolubility of marriage after marriage had come to be seen as a sacrament in 1184 C.E. Toward the end of the fifteenth century we find a growing number of lawsuits in which women sue (absconding) men who had broken a promise of marriage. Because divorce was not permitted by the church, these women had no possibility of remarrying. Regardless of the significance of marriage in the evolving contemporary society, the church thus endorsed a quasi-unworldly discrepancy between the religious concept of marriage and its social reality.

The reformers' position

How did the Reformation respond to this conflict? Luther's remarkable theological reinterpretation of marriage dissolved the tension between the religious concept and the social reality of marriage. He achieved this through a secularizing interpretation, which, paradoxically, let marriage acquire a truly religious character.

There is a close analogy between Luther's reinterpretation of marriage and his reinterpretation of the concept of vocation. With regard to a vocation, Luther points out that a person's daily work or employment represents the true worship of God and that it is to be valued higher, not less, than monastic life with its seclusion. With regard to marriage Luther pursues the same idea: The marital relationship between a man and a woman is true chastity and of higher value than monastic asceticism. Furthermore, he denies the sacramental character of marriage. To live a married life is a worldly affair, but this precisely gives marriage a new religious significance. In Luther's view, it is ordained by God, however, it has no function in the redemption of human beings but only for the preservation of the human race according to the order of creation. It is God's will for all human beings that they should live in marriage—in order to achieve procreation, to cope with their sexuality, and to support each other. Thus the concept of marriage is grounded in the functions it fulfills; the sacramental view is replaced by a functional view.

In so doing Luther brought the religious understanding into line with what had long since become the accepted public understanding of marriage. On the Protestant side, the conflict between the ecclesiastical and the secular views is thereby defused. The significance of marriage for social or-

der is acknowledged, yet the religious understanding of marriage is no longer tied to its unworldly super-elevation but promotes a legal concept which does justice to the actual functions of marriage.

The beneficial consequences of this reinterpretation can best be exemplified by the most significant innovation in Protestant marriage law—divorce. Protestant theology refers to the divinely ordained purpose of marriage and argues that partners in a marriage that no longer fulfils its function can consequently be divorced if marital communion is refused and perpetual quarrelling prevails—even to the detriment of public peace in a parish. I don't want to sing the praises of divorce; who would? Nevertheless, I think that this example is helpful for demonstrating how the Reformation idea of a Christianizing transformation of society works. Reformation thought refrains from proclaiming unworldly norms for social life in the name of religion. Instead, the concept of Christian transformation operates in two stages: first, through inquiring into the justification for and limits of religious norms for relationships between individuals as well as social life more generally, and second, through advocating a legal regulation and a functional view of such modes of living in the name of religion. With regard to marriage it can be claimed that such pragmatic juridification was to the advantage of those traditionally less privileged in a marriage—the women.

Continual reformations

All this of course does not mean that Luther's reinterpretation of marriage in terms of juridical definitions inaugurated a golden age for women. Developing a more abstract legal concept did not prevent Luther from maintaining a traditional view of male predominance in marriage. One might ask, though, why a right of divorce was first codified in Protestant societies and why in Protestant countries a higher proportion of women made use of this right. I do not pursue these questions here. What I have intended to show is how the Reformation replaced a medieval Catholic religious concept of marriage, based on natural law, with a religious concept based on the law of reason. This reinterpretation at least eased the conflict between the religious ideal of marriage and its secular reality, to the advantage of the weaker partner, the wife. But of course, the Reformation is never finished! Wherever men and women struggle to resolve conflicts between religious ideals and the reality of their everyday lives, there the Reformation drives forward.

There is a close analogy between Luther's reinterpretation of marriage and his reinterpretation of the concept of vocation.

Luther on Gender Relations—Just One Reading of Genesis?

Christoph Bultmann
University of Erfurt (Germany)

It is not easy to assess the impact of biblical texts on the understanding of the relationship between men and women during the Reformation at a time when Genesis 3 is echoed on grocery bags of a major U.K. supermarket chain in the question "Why did Eve want to move to New York?—She fell for the Big Apple!" From a biblical scholar's point of view, the most intriguing aspect of the subject "women after the Reformation" is the claim to authoritative scriptural support for a particular concept of gender relations and the place of women in society. In the following observations on Luther's sermons on Genesis, which he delivered two years before he got married himself (in 1525), the biblical background of his views on sexuality, chastity, and marriage is addressed.

Passages that carry the argument in Luther's numerous sermons, treatises, and pamphlets on these issues are from both the Old and the New Testament. They include among others Genesis 1–3; 1 Timothy 2:8–15; 1 Corinthians 7; 11:2–16; 14:26–40; Ephesians 5:21–33; 1 Peter 3:1–7; and, not to be overlooked, Romans 6:12. These words of the Scriptures are complemented by biblical examples, not least the stories about Deborah (Judges 4) and Huldah (2 Kings 22).[1] There can be no question about the authority of Scripture for the reformers in the sixteenth century. One might wonder whether scriptural authority for them extended to matters of ordinary life in family and society, but one will soon find that this was clearly the case, notably with regard to marriage.[2] Thus the Reformers' use of the Bible could be seen as providing a model for reflecting upon gender relations in the light of the biblical tradition today.

On the other hand, it is a commonplace that the Bible has lost its authority in many areas of modern life, that our situation today is characterized by pluralism, and that people are free to make their own choices and therefore adopt an enormous variety of lifestyles. It seems important right at the outset to acknowledge this aspect of choice over against any hasty attempts at claiming a normative status for recommendations of particular forms of relations between the sexes even if these come close to what

[1] The text-critical and hermeneutical decisions behind Luther's use of Dan 11:37 would require a separate discussion (Antiochus IV, that is, the Antichrist, that is, the Pope, "will show no regard for married women").

[2] See, for example, the emphasis on marriage in a list of the reformers' achievements in Luther's preface of 1528 to a book by Steffen Klingsbeyl: *Weimarer Ausgabe* (WA) 26:530–33.

certain biblical texts seem to demand.[3] The foremost aspect of this change may be seen in equal access to education—Luther never met a female fellow student at university!

Reading Moses

Because the situation of women in today's world seems so profoundly different from their situation in earlier centuries, the following analogy suggests itself as one reads Luther's comments on gender roles in his interpretation of Genesis: Just as the biblical tradition is no longer an authoritative source of information about the age and the origin of the world, it can no longer be quarried for normative assertions about gender relations. The history of biblical interpretation shows that until the late eighteenth century—and in some circles even beyond that time—the Bible allowed everyone who read the Genesis story of creation to think they knew that the earth was almost 6,000 years old (Archbishop Ussher's famous date for the creation was 4004 B.C.E.) and that, for example, plants and trees had covered the ground even before the sun had been formed. Geology and the other natural sciences helped to overcome such ideas.[4] In an analogous development, the Bible, which shaped the predominant view of the role of women right into the twentieth century, has lost its status as a standard for defining gender roles. Feminism and the social sciences may not have the same scientific character as geology and the natural sciences, but their effect on certain forms of reception of the Bible is just as strong, no matter whether it arises from a new human self-awareness or from an accumulation of knowledge.[5]

A brief discussion of Luther's reading of Genesis 1–3 will serve to explain and justify the suggested analogy. Three preliminary points should be noted. First,

The Bible . . . has lost its status as a standard for defining gender roles.

Luther did, of course, consider those chapters as authoritative divine teaching through Moses, not as the expression of religious insights by anonymous authors from the First or Second Temple periods in Judah. Second, as several New Testament writers refer to the text, Luther also takes writings such as 1 Timothy or 1 Corinthians into account, and this immediately sets his interpretation in a context of concerns about fornication (1 Cor 7:2) and discipline. Third, the sermons of 1523 show a remarkable intersection of, not to say confusion between, exegesis and church politics. Luther's comments on sexuality and marriage are informed by his opposition to

[3] See, however, the argument in favor of a plain-sense reading of the Bible in Christopher Seitz, "Sexuality and Scripture's Plain Sense: The Christian Community and the Law of God," in *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture*, ed. David L. Balch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 177–81.

[4] An outline of this development can be found in Claude C. Albritton, *The Abyss of Time* (San Francisco: Freeman, Cooper & Co., 1980); a survey of nineteenth-century controversies in Peter Addinall, *Philosophy and Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[5] For contemporary thought concerning the situation of women one might refer to Martha C. Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

celibacy and monastic vows rather than by any concerns with the role and self-esteem of women. Tracts such as those on marriage (1519, 1522), his defense of the escape of a group of nuns from a monastery (1523), or his appeal to the Knights of the Teutonic Order (1523), as well as his exposition of 1 Corinthians 7 (1523), date from about the same period as the sermons on Genesis.[6]

Sexuality and marriage

As far as the role of women is concerned, the sermons offer three main arguments. To start with, Luther understands human sexuality in terms of its power of reproduction. As such, it is a natural force that holds human beings in its grip, male and female alike. Luther takes the words of the divine blessing in Gen 1:28, "be fruitful and multiply," to mean that human beings cannot and must not resist this generative sexual power, except in those very rare cases where freedom from its overwhelming force has been granted by a special gift of God. Where Luther refers to the story of the fall, he distinguishes emphatically between the loss of the "image of God" and the continuation of this natural force of sexuality, though now corrupted by a sense of sexual pleasure.[7] Gender relations or the personal identity of a man or a woman are only conceived of in the perspective of this understanding of sexuality as a power of reproduction—in a far more radical way than is the case in 1 Corinthians 7, it would seem.

Luther then insists that the social shape in which this natural force ought to find its realization is marriage. He already asserts this in his interpretation of Genesis 1 and only confirms it when he comes to Genesis 2. Thus he states, "It has been decreed by God that you ought to be married, there is no free will here." Accordingly, he notes in his comments on the biblical motif of the woman as a man's "helper," "Women were created to no other purpose than to serve a man, and to be a helper in procreation."[8]

It may be worthwhile to pause for a brief discussion of these first two points and their exegetical merit. One wonders whether there is any reason here to speak of a heightened appreciation of sexuality, of a higher estimation of marriage and of women, or whatever other apologetic formulae one finds in standard works on the Reformation. It would be more appropriate to note that in such passages women are reduced to one function—to bear and to raise children. And this concept underlies all the rest of what Luther has to say about the relationship between men and women. In his biblical theology of creation, Genesis 1 becomes a source of the notion of human generative power as a natural force, and, taken together with Genesis 2, also of the notion of the estate of marriage as the one divinely ordained form in which this power ought to realize itself.

Against this reading of Genesis, two exegetical objections may be raised. First, Luther seems to understand the biblical concept of blessing in Gen 1:28 in accordance with the Aristotelian category of a *causa finalis*, the purpose for which something exists. He may, after all, have re-

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[6] For the texts see WA vols. 2, 10/2, 11, 12; most of them are also in *Luther's Works* (*LW*) 44, 45, 28. The sermons on Genesis are in WA 14 (manuscript transcriptions) and WA 24 (the German and Latin printed editions of 1527), but not in *LW*. The later lectures on Genesis of 1535(-45) are in WA 42 and *LW* 1 (where the page numbers of WA are given). It is worth comparing Erasmus of Rotterdam's Praise of Matrimony of 1518: *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), vols. 25/26:129–45, 528–29; 71:85–95.

[7] See WA 24:50–54; WA 14:111–14.

[8] The quotes are from WA 24:54 and 79 (my transl.), cf. WA 14:126–27.

ceived a too profound philosophical education at the University of Erfurt![9] Whereas in the biblical text God graciously endows human beings with the power of generation, in Luther's anthropological thought, God through his blessing defines the inescapable destination of human beings, namely to procreate. This understanding becomes even more problematic where Luther claims that unlike the original creation "in the image of God," this destination has not been affected by the fall (except for the aspect of pleasure). A second objection would be that Luther's narrow and one-sided interpretation of the biblical motif of a "helper" is not justified.[10]

Subordination

Against the background of these deeply held beliefs, the third and widely known aspect of Luther's conclusions from Genesis 1–3 with regard to gender relations is not surprising: subordination (to use a New Testament term: 1 Tim 2:11; 1 Cor 14:34; Eph 5:21f.; 1 Pet 3:1). Curiously, in his sermons on Genesis this aspect is not even counterbalanced by the aspect of mutual love as it is, for example, in Ephesians. Luther misses no opportunity to stress the primacy of the male partner. Why did God give Adam the commandment not to eat from the tree of knowledge even before Eve had been created (Gen 2:17)? This shows that a woman should not receive the Word of God without mediation; rather Eve was to learn it from Adam. Thus, Luther concludes, "even before the fall the ruling power and governance was with the male person." It is therefore not fully convincing when it is claimed that according to Luther "women would have remained equal to men in all respects" if Eve had not sinned.[11] Why is the Hebrew designation *'issâ* (woman) derived from *'îs* (man) in Gen 2:23? This shows that the woman owes her name to the man and that, again, "he retains the ruling power." Why does God ask in the singular, "Adam, where are you?" (Gen 3:9)? This shows "that God confers the office of ruling, teaching, and preaching to the male person." Similarly on Gen 3:20 with a reference to 1 Pet 3:7. Is this really what the biblical text is about?[12]

From the perspective of biblical studies, it appears that Luther's view of women is embedded in a reception of the biblical tradition that culminates in a convenient assertion of certain preconceptions. I doubt whether today we would call these anything but discrimination against women—notwithstanding Luther's claim to scriptural support for his views. Historians may argue about whether or not the Reformation had a liberating effect for women. But if one studies the core concept as it is developed in biblical interpretation, any sense of freedom for women seems to have been eclipsed.

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[9] See his remarks on university reform in *To the Christian Nobility* of 1520: WA 6:457–58 (*LW* 44:200–207). The lectures of 1535 contain several digressions on Aristotle, cf. esp. WA 42:93–95 and 102.

[10] The emphasis is slightly different in the lectures of 1535, however, *generatio* (procreation) is still defined as second only to the *praedicatio nominis Dei* (proclamation of the name of God), WA 42:87–89.

[11] Charmarie J. Blaisdell, "Women in the Lutheran and Calvinist Movements," in *Triumph over Silence: Women in Protestant History*, ed. Richard L. Greaves (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 15–16. Although this view does occur in the lectures of 1535, it is also contradicted there: WA 42:87 against 51. See also Merry E. Wiesner, "Nuns, Wives, and Mothers: Women and the Reformation in Germany," in *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe*, ed. Sherrin Marshall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 12.

[12] WA 24:72, 80, 107, 113 (my trans.).

Even where the concept of priesthood in the Catholic Church is replaced by the concept of ministry in the Protestant setting, women are excluded from "teaching and preaching." While this position may follow from texts such as 1 Timothy 2, there is no reason why it should also be anchored in Genesis 1–3. An inquiry into Luther's reading of Genesis thus makes us aware of the contrast between what he accepted and propounded as normative Christian teaching and what has become common sense today. The concept of gender relations as it was developed during the Reformation has become part of the history of ideas[13] just as have traditional, biblically based assumptions about the age and the origin of the earth.

The Bible's authority

I do not here address the issue of the significance of the Reformation for the emergence of modern biblical criticism. However, I would like to balance my critique of Luther's use of the Bible for defining gender relations with acknowledging two fundamental points where reference to his work remains a great stimulus for contemporary exegesis. The first is Luther's insistence on the authority of Scripture. It should not be denied that the biblical tradition is the proper standard for Christian theological thought, even if we have come to realize that God does not dwell within the words of the Scriptures in the way the Reformers and their successors for many generations saw it. Second is Luther's unambiguous orientation towards the gospel and faith. It remains a central tenet in Christian theology and church life that God is perceived with the eyes of a faith that entails justification. However, we have come to realize that there is greater freedom to develop a variety of distinctive ways of life in family and society than the Reformers would have admitted. Luther's preoccupation with monastic vows and other similar issues of his day prevented him from fully realizing the consequences of what even he himself points out in some passages of his exposition of 1 Corinthians 7.[14] We should therefore not look for guidance where we meet with inconsiderate and prejudiced views on gender relations in Luther's reading of Genesis, but instead we should sharpen our sense for the Bible's contribution to protecting human dignity.

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[13] See the intriguing study by James G. Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), esp. 57–62 and 120–23 on Luther.

[14] Notably on vv. 17 and 24; WA 12 (*LW* 28): 126, 131.

Windows on Life—Women after the Reformation

Ute Mennecke-Haustein
University of Jena (Germany)

As the title of this essay indicates, the Reformation meant a significant turning point for women's lives. In those territories where the Reformation won acceptance, monastic life and the celibacy of priests were abolished, marriage of the clergy was introduced, and the propagation of marriage was generally increased. All these were drastic and publicly visible changes—but what stood behind these changes? We cannot simply look at the events in isolation from their context and without asking the question of why they happened and in what spirit. One instance of a controversial judgment on the historical events may illustrate the problem: Did the Reformation cause a loss of freedom for women because monastic life came to be prohibited? Or was this a move in the interest of the liberation of women from oppression? We see that in today's debates categories such as liberation and oppression are applied to life in a convent and to married life. Can such a conceptual framework be justified?

In order to answer this question as a church historian, I will first let history speak for itself. I start with an outline of the conflict about the alternative of monastic life or marriage. Second, I address the use of the language of liberation in this context. In a third section, I explore what other options there might have been for women during and after the Reformation. Finally, I offer some thoughts on the relevance of this historical subject for today.

A case of coercion

Nuremberg, 1525. On 3 February, Ursula Tetzel, a widow, turned up at the gate of the Convent of St. Clare and asked for permission to talk to her daughter Margarete, whom she had shut up in the convent at the age of 15, in 1516. In the meantime the mother had come to the conviction that she had not dealt with her daughter in a genuinely Christian way, that on the contrary she had exposed her to great peril for her conscience. She now demanded that Margarete leave the convent at least for a certain period in order to have an opportunity to listen to Protestant sermons in churches in the city. The abbess refused the demand, and Margarete told her mother through a small opening in the chapel wall that she wanted to stay in the convent.

The abbess, no less a figure than Caritas Pirckheimer (1467–1532), a learned woman and well connected with many of the great humanists of the early sixteenth century (and of course a sister of the famous humanist Willibald Pirckheimer, 1470–1530), declared that she would obey a ruling of the Nuremberg City Council but that there would be no chance for Margarete to return once she had left the convent. Eventually Ursula Tetzel and the parents of two other

nuns secured support from the civic authorities and got their daughters out of the convent—against their own will and not without the use of physical force.[1] Even at the time people condemned that unpleasant scene. No favorable light falls from here on the Reformers' concerns! But let us see what the position of the parties involved really was.

Why leave a convent? The mother who was impressed by the new teaching of the Reformation may have fallen into qualms of conscience after reading Luther's treatise on monastic vows of 1521 or his apology for nuns who had escaped from a convent in 1523.[2] For Luther it followed directly from the concept of justification through faith that such vows could not be in accordance with faith, and he also denied that sexual asceticism was in accordance with the Word of God. Furthermore, it would be humanly impossible to keep a vow of celibacy throughout life.

Another source of inspiration for Tetzel may have been an autobiographical account by Florentina von Oberweimar that was published with a preface by Luther in 1524. This work is no theological treatise but a plain account of how Florentina was forced to enter a convent, her "Babylonische Gefenknis" (Babylonian captivity), how she had found that the monastic life was combatting her "nature" rather than advancing her salvation, and how the abbess had tried to break her resistance through all sorts of humiliations and disciplinary actions. Luther in his preface emphasizes "what a devilish thing the system of nuns and monks is, in which driving people to God is being attempted with sheer force and coercion, with sticks and with stocks. And this despite the fact that God repeatedly affirms in Scriptures that he wants no forced service and that no one should be such (i.e. a celibate religious) except of his own free will and out of love. My God, will we not learn our lesson? Do we not have a mind and ears? I repeat: God wants no forced service. I say it for a third time, yes, I say it a hundred times: God wants no forced service."[3]

Looking beyond the situation in 1525, we may also refer to a pamphlet (with an epilogue by Luther) of 1528 in which Ursula von Münsterberg gives her reasons for leaving her convent. The former nun appeals to baptism and argues that whereas in baptism an "indissoluble bond of marital union" with Christ is established through faith, in a monastic vow this bond is broken through "our fabricated works in which we put our trust."[4] Instead of regarding precisely a nun as a bride of Christ in the spiritual sense of medieval theology, it is now the ordinary Christian life that is seen as an unsurpassed "marriage" with Christ in which liberation from sins can be found.

Why stay in a convent? As a representative of monastic devotion, the abbess Caritas Pirckheimer insisted that she did not

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[1] See the account in Andreas Osiander, *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Gerhard Müller (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1975ff.), vol. 1, 464–70.

[2] *The Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows*, *LW* 44:251–400, and the dedicatory letter in *LW* 48:329–36 (=WA 8: 573–669); *Ursache und Antwort, daß Jungfrauen Klöster göttlich verlassen mögen* (A treatise showing that women are divinely permitted to leave a convent), WA 11:394–400.

[3] *A Story of how God rescued an honorable Nun, accompanied by a Letter of Martin Luther to the Counts of Mansfeld*, *LW* 43:85–96 (=WA 15:86–94), 86–87 (=87).

[4] *Christliche Ursach des verlassen Klosters zu Freiberg* (Christian reasons for leaving the convent at Freiberg), the epilogue in WA 26:628–33, the full text in *Luther's Works*, ed. Johann Georg Walch, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1880ff.), 19:1694–1723, 1700. The passage referred to includes an allusion to Hos 2:20.

put any pressure at all on any members of the convent in order to make them stay. Whoever wanted to leave was allowed to do so. However, she saw it as her obligation to defend those who wanted to stay. Whether or not monastic life was acceptable to God was for God alone to decide, not for humans. The nuns, Caritas went on, felt called by God to a monastic life without believing that their salvation altogether depended on this. Also, Christ had called for an imitation of the way of the cross, and their life in the convent reflected just that in that they subjected their body to the dominance of the spirit. For that reason they were concerned that they could not be saved outside the convent and wanted to remain faithful to their state into which they had been called by God. Finally, she rejected any suspicion that the nuns wanted to stay "von guttes leben wegen," for having a good life.[5]

We don't hear anything from Margarete Tetzel herself in our sources. There are, however, a few pamphlets in which nuns publicly defended their decision not to leave a convent although their families urged them to do so. Thus, a nun at Marienstein tells her brother in 1524 that monastic life was no offense against God's will. It was grounded in Paul's teaching, who states in 1 Cor 7:34 that "the unmarried woman and the virgin are anxious about the affairs of the Lord." The author does not reply to the charge that living as a nun means to evade the "pangs in childbearing" of which Gen 3:16 speaks. To live in a convent means for her to forsake the world because in the world it is difficult to avoid unchastity.[6] The Reformation is here seen as leading toward a wrong, carnal use of Christian freedom.

The political authorities. The Council of the City of Nuremberg, which took the side of Ursula Tetzel in the conflict, was supported by the expert opinion of the theologian Andreas Osiander (1498–1552). He stated that the mother had brought her daughter into peril and now had an obligation to free her from that peril. Worship in the convent was no true worship but just Popish rites. The rule of the order of St. Clare was in opposition to the Word of God, which clearly demanded that one should honor one's father and mother.[7] In consequence, the Council made the Decalogue the standard for its decision and assumed an authority to enforce obedience to it. Although this view conflicted sharply with the traditional understanding of the monastic vow, it duly reflected the prevalence of Scripture over the Canonical Law according to Luther's writings. Margarete Tetzel eventually got

The abbess insisted that whether or not monastic life was acceptable to God was for God alone to decide, not for humans.

[5] *Die "Denkwürdigkeiten" der Caritas Pirckheimer aus den Jahren 1524–1528*, ed. Josef Pfanner (Landshut: Solanus-Druck, 1962), 11, 21–24.

[6] *Ayn Sendbrieff/ vonn ainer Andaechtigen frumen klosterfrawen von Marienstayn/ an yren bruoder Endris vonn wegen der Lutherischen ler.* [Augsburg] 1524, 1; quoted from *Flugschriften des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts auf Microfiche*, ed. Hans-Joachim Köhler (Zug: Inter Documentation Co., 1979ff.), fiche 843 no. 2115.

[7] As in Osiander (n. 1).

married in 1530 and had four children, thus leading a life that was regarded as pleasing to God in the Reformation.[8]

Luther. As the conflict in Nuremberg demonstrates, the reformers did not advocate freedom of conscience in a sense of an individual's subjective persuasion, including a right to err, but they only regarded a conscience that was liberated by the Word of God as a higher authority. It can fairly be said that Luther's writings on marriage, notably his *The Estate of Marriage* of 1522, had a major impact on the general debate.[9] In arguing against sexual asceticism, Luther refers to the will of God the creator: God has endowed the human beings with an irresistible sexual drive in order to preserve humankind. Neither does God demand sexual continence, nor are human beings able to achieve it. The way of life that truly conforms to the order of creation, therefore, is marriage, because in marriage sexual desire is not suppressed but confirmed, while at the same time the requirement of chastity is met. Luther characterizes this aspect of marriage in a sermon of 1519 as follows: "By binding themselves to each other, and surrendering themselves to each other, the way is barred to the body of anyone else, and they content themselves in the marriage bed with their one companion. In this way God sees to it that the flesh is subdued so as not to rage wherever and however it pleases."[10] Since marriage has its foundation in the divine command of Gen 1:28, "be fruitful and multiply," it is not a specifically Christian but simply a worldly way of life, it is part of the order of creation rather than the economy of salvation.[11]

Such views are echoed in Katharina Zell's *Apology* for her marriage with a Protestant minister in Strasbourg. She sees marriage and fornication in clear opposition and emphasizes that no one is free from sexual desire. It seems that people understood Luther's thought that even sins committed in thought only are sins, and that consequently those who are not married must lead a sinful life. This suggested the conclusion that human beings are under an obligation to get married. The only exception is that some may have been granted the special gift of chastity, and Katharina Zell refers to Matthew 19:12 in order to link this idea with the proclamation of the gospel rather than with monastic seclusion. However, as women are not allowed to preach (according to 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14), it would make even less sense for a woman to claim the gift of chastity. A woman can therefore only live in accordance with the Word of God and God's promise of grace if she gets married.[12]

When he had written his treatise on monastic vows, Luther had only demanded that marriage should be open to everyone. The issue turned on freedom, not coercion, because it was clear that a marriage needs to be based on mutual affection between two partners. At the same time the emphasis on human nature and on the human incapacity to lead a life in chastity could, however, result in shifting the weight toward the claim that marriage ought to be "the com-

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[8] In contrast, a disastrous story of a nun who left her convent and got married is discussed in Hans-Christoph Rublack, . . . *hat die Nonne den Pfarrer geküsst? Aus dem Alltag der Reformationszeit* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1991), 108–18.

[9] *LW* 45:17–49 (=WA 10/2:275–304).

[10] *A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage*, *LW* 44:7–14 (=WA 2:166–71), 11 (=169).

[11] See Luther's *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* of 1520, *LW* 36:11–126, esp. 92–96 (=WA 6:497–573, esp. 550–53).

[12] *Entschuldigung Katharina Schützinn für M. Matthes Zellen jren Eegemahel (1524)* in Elsie A. McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1999), vol. 2:21–47, esp. 35–36.

mon road of a Christian life." It is this narrow and nomistic concept that seems to have become most popular with some theologically not so sophisticated pamphleteers.[13]

On freedom

"Freedom" is of course one of the key terms in the Reformation era. Yet what was meant was the freedom of the Christian, not the personal freedom of a man or a woman.[14] The reformers were concerned with the priestly and the royal freedom granted in Christian faith: priestly freedom gives us the right to enter into a relationship with God as God's children and to speak to God, and royal freedom results from this as a fundamental attitude of freedom toward the world. We are only bound by love to obey the rules of the world (as long as they are not opposed to God's will). The status of a monk or a nun is seen by Luther as lacking any kind of freedom. It is conditioned by a vow that contradicts faith and establishes a status that is not supported by the Word of God and is against human nature. For Luther there can be no freedom apart from faith.

Marriage, conversely, could obviously not be called a state of freedom. Women suffer pain in childbirth, and men are under an obligation to provide for their wives and children (for which reference was made to Gen 3:16–19). Speaking of the yoke of marriage was a familiar topos in humanistic writings, and Luther tries to overcome this attitude when, in his treatise *The Estate of Marriage*, he recommends marriage as a vision for life, which (provided that it is lived in faith) means comfort insofar as it pleases God and delight insofar as it establishes a communion of man and woman.

What about freedom and life as a nun? A convent was not about external personal freedom. The purpose of the required vow of obedience to an abbess as a representative of divine authority was precisely to break the human self-will. Thus again the freedom that was the goal of monastic life was a spiritual freedom: liberation from sensual desires, a liberating of the spirit through ascetic exercise. As Caritas Pirckheimer put it, the nuns strove to be "free with regard to the spirit, not the body."[15]

Thus we see two concepts of freedom behind the alternative of marriage or life in a convent, yet both concepts were of course intended to express obedience to the will of God—freedom from sensuality through asceticism versus freedom from agonies of conscience through the discovery that one's irrepressible natural condition was in accordance with the will of the creator. The experience of freedom in marriage had a spiritual dimension insofar as the conscience was concerned, but at the same time it was external insofar as it allowed one to accept one's sexuality. From the perspective of the monastic tradition, such external freedom was regarded as being in opposition to a truly Christian life, and the "toil and trouble" of a nun's life was emphasized. This was countered by pointing to the "toil and trouble" of a wife and mother who day after day "washes nappies, spoon-feeds pap to her baby, cooks for the master of the house-

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[13] See for example Bernhard Rem, *Ain Sendtbrieff an ettlich Closterfrawen zu sant katherina und zu sant niclas in Augspurg*, Augsburg 1523, p. A iij v; as in note 6 above, fiche 225, no. 632. Life in a monastery or nunnery should be "regarded with suspicion by everyone because it diverges from the common road of a Christian life and tries to find a special path towards heaven."

[14] See Luther's treatise *The Freedom of a Christian*, *LW* 31:333–77 (=WA 7:20–38, 49–73).

[15] See Pfanner (n. 5), 12.



hold, in short raises her children by the sweat of her face," thereby proving herself to be a sincere Christian who gives "witness to her faith through service for her neighbor."[16] In a polemical turn, Katharina Zell states that "in marriage you suffer much sorrow, which those who live in celibacy want to avoid."[17] However, which distress did truly reflect an imitation of the way of the cross? Common sense, not least under the influence of humanistic thought, generally decried the life of nuns as pointless and idle.

As the aspect of individual ethics lost ground, more emphasis was put on the aspect of social ethics. Caritas Pirckheimer defended life in a convent as a communitarian way of life resembling the ideal of the first Christian communities.[18] I shall not pursue further aspects of the debate here. As a curiosity, let me just mention a marginal pamphlet in which we encounter a strangely nomistic understanding of Gen 3:16: Nuns are accused of refusing the obedience they owe as women to God and to male persons when they lock themselves in in a convent instead of having children and subordinating themselves to their husbands.[19]

As we survey these controversies, is it fair to conclude that the new image of a married woman was "hardly a liberating one"?[20] Such a statement seems arrogant to me, because it implies that we are in a position to define what "freedom" would have meant for people who lived far in the past. The aspect of personal freedom and self-determination so important to us today was not what lay at the heart of the debate about life in a convent or in marriage. We need to be absolutely clear about this. Freedom meant a freedom to be experienced in one's conscience, freedom from sin, life in accordance with God's will. Self-determination or self-realization did not become a Christian value until the late eighteenth century. If we wanted to apply these terms to the age of the Reformation at all, we could at best recognize this spark of compatibility between the divine will and human fulfillment in a union in love of a man and a woman.[21] This was a great thing! However, it meant that one had to overcome the traditional theological concept accord-

[16] Bernhard Rem, as in note 13. See also Bernd Moeller, "Die Brautwerbung Martin Bucers für Wolfgang Capito. Zur Sozialgeschichte des evangelischen Pfarrerstandes," in idem, *Die Reformation und das Mittelalter* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 151–60, esp. 152.

[17] McKee (n. 12), 37.

[18] See Pfanner (n. 5), 24.

[19] See Robert Stupperich, "Die Frau in der Publizistik der Reformation," in *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 35, 1955, 204–33, esp. 208–9.

[20] Catharina J. M. Halkes, *Gott hat nicht nur starke Söhne. Grundzüge einer feministischen Theologie* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1985), 109.

[21] See Bernd Moeller, "Wenzel Lincks Hochzeit. Über Sexualität, Keuschheit und Ehe in der frühen Reformation," in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 97, 2000, 317–42.

ing to which a life that would please God always required self-denial, and it was therefore not spelled out very often.

No preaching

In what other ways did the Reformation affect women's lives? When convents were abolished, could theologically minded women become preachers of the gospel rather than getting married? It is true that the reformers fought against the concept of a special status of the clergy and advocated the idea of a universal priesthood of all Christian believers. However, this was only the background for a new concept of an office in the church, and the fundamental equality of men and women was undermined by the Pauline prohibition for women to lead a congregation (1 Tim 2:12; 1 Cor 14:34). Whereas Luther in principle acknowledges the spiritual authorization of women to perform an office in the church, he restricts it to situations when "no men are around," thereby leaving unresolved the conflict between the Pauline prohibition and the promise of Joel 2:28.[22] Nevertheless, while women remained excluded from office, the priesthood of all believers took them beyond a total dependence on a male priestly and sacramental mediation of any approach to God and their adoption as children of God.

What is more, the concept of priesthood even implied an imperative: Do take a responsibility for your faith! Don't hide yourself behind external, ecclesiastical authorities! In consequence, the reformers called for literacy and a basic education for girls. Women such as Katharina Zell, Argula von Grumbach, and Ursula Weyd justified their attempts to publish theological writings by appealing to the Christian obligation to confess one's faith and did not altogether meet with opposition. But as time went on and the message of the reformers developed into a doctrine that was to be protected by official ecclesiastical theology as *pura doctrina*, the exclusion of women became even stricter. What about charity work? As far as this was concerned, the reformers did not accept it as an excuse for not marrying, because, as they saw it, such work could just as well be done by married women, notably the wives of Protestant ministers. The life of unmarried women in a community would have too closely resembled a convent.[23] Fresh impulses such as those of Pietism and then of the Enlightenment and many other factors such as the social work of Christian associations in the nineteenth century or the impact of the gradual admission of women to university eventually led to a situation as we know it today when women are no longer excluded from the Protestant ministry.

Feminist critics

In recent years the evaluation of the Reformation with regard to the situation of women has been in considerable flux. A predominantly positive view of its impact on the emancipation of women has given way to a negative judgment from a feminist perspective. The main reason for this is a changed view of marriage. When Luther and the reformers generally advocated marriage as strongly as they did, it corresponded to a new perception of human beings. The biblical idea "and they become one flesh" was something like a guiding principle. True

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[22] See *The Misuse of the Mass* of 1521, LW 36:127–230 (= WA 8:482-563, the Latin version 411-76).

[23] Susan C. Karant-Nunn, "Continuity and change: Some Effects of the Reformation on the Women of Zwickau," in *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 12, 1982, 17–42, esp. 22f.

The aspect of personal freedom and self-determination so important to us today was not what lay at the heart of the debate about life in a convent or in marriage.

humanity for them was realized in a union of man and woman, in solidarity and partnership between the sexes. Take the marriage portrait of Luther and Katharina von Bora as a piece of evidence for this: Each of the two is painted in a medallion, but facing each other.[24] The emphasis is not on personal autonomy, on being-for-oneself, but on being tied together, on reliance on each other, on a mutual being-for-the-other. In 1537 Luther remarked on a portrait of his wife, "I think I'll have a husband added to that painting, send it to Mantua (i.e., to the council called to meet in Mantua), and inquire whether they prefer marriage [to celibacy]."[25] A pictorial representation alone was enough to demonstrate to a council that man and woman belonged together!

Historically it was not seen as a problem when the male partner more often than not dominated the union of marriage. Things are different today, although in many cases the concern is less with overcoming this imbalance and establishing true partnership than with the validity of the ideal itself. It has been replaced by a concept of personal autonomy. The idea of marriage no longer satisfies the striving for personal independence. Marriage as a mutual engagement with the other, and with the other sex, almost seems to have become an unattainable thought. Occasionally this is pushed so far that medieval monastic life as a form of communal life of independent individuals of the same sex can be regarded as a serious alternative to marriage (although in fact monasteries and convents today don't enjoy much popularity). What this tells us as church historians is how remote the era of the Reformation has become for us—its understanding of human life, of human sexuality, of human self-realization. However, just as history does not simply offer models for identification, it is not simply a target of criticism, either. The best we can do is to ask the question, or rather to confront the question: Is what we are doing now any better?

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[24] Werner Schade, "Cranachs Bildnisse der Frau Katharina," in *Katharina von Bora*, ed. Martin Treu (Wittenberg: Stiftung Luthergedenkstätten, 1999), 52–58.

[25] Table Talk, *LW* 54:222 (=WA TR 3: 378–79), No. 3528.

Martin Luther and Female Education

Andrea Schulte
University of Erfurt (Germany)

Basic principles of a Christian education

From my perspective as an educator, the subject "Luther and women" invites reflections about the extent and ways the reformer was concerned with creating opportunities for girls and young women in the educational system.

The Reformation period did not lead to very specific concepts of education for girls and women. Nevertheless, Luther stated a number of general principles of Christian education that took the religious education of women into account. According to these, schooling and education are absolutely necessary. Every Christian must be enabled to understand the Word of God and to acquire and cultivate the ability to engage responsibly with Holy Scripture. Thus, for example, lay persons ought to be encouraged through translations of the Bible in vernacular languages to independently deepen their religious understanding. This is central to all efforts at providing education. The study of Holy Scripture was designed to be "the foremost reading for everybody" in all types of schools. Luther draws a comparison with the training for a craft and says, "Is it not only right that every Christian man know the entire holy gospel by the age of nine or ten? Does he not derive his name and his life from the gospel? A spinner or a seamstress teaches her daughter her craft in her early years."[1] The standard of education for a society in which every individual becomes a Christian through the gospel of Christ does not allow for any differentiation based on gender.

The educational impetus extends to the family as much as to the school and the church. The first instruction for a child is instruction at home. Thus a child is first introduced to religious faith within the family. Luther's catechism of 1529 emerges as enormously popular reading. In it he assigns the master of a household the educational task to instruct children in the three most important constituents of Christian faith: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. "Therefore, it is the duty of every head of a household to examine his children and servants at least once a week and ascertain what they have learned of it, and if they do not know it, to keep them faithfully at it."[2] Building on

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[1] *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate*, *LW* 44:123–217 (=WA 6:404–69), 205–6 (=461), quoted in *Religionspädagogik: Texte zur evangelischen Erziehungs-und Bildungsverantwortung seit der Reformation*, ed. Karl E. Nipkow and Friedrich Schweitzer (München: Kaiser, 1991), I:45.

[2] *The Large Catechism*, in *The Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 357–461 (=WA 30/1: 125–238), 362 (=129), quoted in Nipkow and Schweitzer, I:75.

this, children and all lay persons were required to attend Sunday services in church on a regular basis and especially catechism lessons, which followed the service. Ideally all classes of society ought to be educated as conscious Christian believers.

However, education in the family and in church is not enough. The secular political authority is therefore given a responsibility for the provision of schooling as a further educational means. In his treatise *To the Christian Nobility* (1520), Luther admonishes the nobility to set up schools so that everyone would be able to read the gospel. The school education of girls is explicitly mentioned: "And would to God that every town had a girls' school as well, where the girls would be taught the gospel for an hour every day either in German or in Latin."[3] Here we find an authentic voice from the Reformation demanding the introduction of schools specifically for girls. Luther did not grow weary of calling for a proper school education for both boys and girls. In 1524 he published his appeal *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany that They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools*.[4] To provide a good education was seen as a divine command. The civic authorities must not neglect it. Luther rounded off his ideas about education when in 1530 he published his *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School* and called for a general compulsory education.[5]

Luther focuses more on the education of boys and young men who would receive a vocational training for ministry or civic government. The education of girls would be orientated toward life in a household and its immediate neighborhood—toward domestic management and marriage and the raising of children. As far as school education is concerned, Luther does introduce a differentiation on the grounds of gender. Higher education is reserved for male students. Yet when Luther calls for qualified women to become teachers, he takes a step toward a more comprehensive education of women. Women would need to be given special training to enable them to work as teachers. And, as we have seen, Luther forcefully advocates the institution of schools for girls.

Protestant church constitutions and the foundation of girls' schools

Most of the sixteenth-century constitutions for the territorial Protestant churches also contain regulations for schools. Issues concerning education were of foremost interest for the church. About forty collections of Protestant constitutional rules are known in which Luther's impulse for the institution of girls' schools was taken up; some of them are more and others less specific about the required teaching for girls.[6] Let us use Wittenberg as a concrete example. The regulations of 1533 for schools there show that on the advice of Luther and Johannes Bugenhagen, the pastor at the Wittenberg town church, and with the support of the City Council, a girls' school was founded that had its own master. The curriculum for the girls included the following: Classes were taught on all working days. The morning sessions were devoted to learning to read, to practicing reading, and to repeating what had been read. Those who had mastered reading were to be given lessons in

[3] As in note 1.

[4] *LW* 45:347–78 (=WA 15:27–53).

[5] *LW* 46:213–58 (=WA 30/2:517–88).

[6] S. Westphal, "Reformatorische Bildungskonzepte für Mädchen und Frauen—Theorie und Praxis," in *Geschichte der Mädchen-und Frauenbildung*, ed. Elke Kleinau and Claudia Opitz (Frankfurt/Main and New York: Campus, 1996), I:142.

writing after lunch from 12 to 2 p.m. Following this, the singing of psalms and the practicing of scales were scheduled. In due course the girls were also supposed to learn the numbers and some arithmetic. Wednesday and Saturday mornings were reserved for catechism lessons. The girls had a lunchtime break. There were no classes on Sunday.[7]

To put such a program into practice was difficult in many places and was handled differently from state to state and from town to town. It is therefore not easy to come to any general conclusions about how much school education girls in fact received. Research in this area is still a desideratum. It is safe to say that the establishment of girls' schools lagged behind that of boys' schools, and it was possible only for boys to move on to a higher education. One consequence of the Reformation was the disappearance of convents as a kind of educational institution for women.

Schooling and education for girls and women as an abiding issue

Luther himself emphasized the practical training of women for running a household but did not envisage higher education for women. Nevertheless, the reformers contributed to a development which, at least in theory, improved access to elementary skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic for wider sections of the female population. This contribution must not be underestimated. Reading skills above all facilitate an independent acquisition of knowledge by the individual. They are therefore a significant step towards the emancipation of women.

Furthermore, the Reformation gave women an impulse to participate in scholarly debates. For a short moment all segments of society, men and women alike, experienced a kind of religious upheaval. Women supported the new doctrines. Women joined the reform movement.[8] Motivated by their deep convictions, women acquired a thorough understanding of the new religious teaching. They studied the Bible at home, they wrote expositions of biblical texts and composed prayer books. They unfolded their creativity in writing hymns. They did all this as "defenders of the new teaching . . . in the more intimate circles of a home or a parish."[9]

To conclude, readers may get mixed impressions of Luther's contribution to the development of school education for girls and young women. Scholarly opinions cover a wide spectrum about this, ranging from the view that Luther was a promotor of equal rights for women to the view that he was a protagonist in the oppression of women. It may well be that we have to leave the issue undecided. Some of Luther's ideas were more traditional, others were more progressive.

Martin Luther and the reformers generally point to the immense importance of education and more specifically school education in Protestantism. They did not ignore the issue of educating girls and young women, they addressed it directly. Against this background we can make a number of observations on the opportunities that became available for women in public as well as private spheres, the house, the family, the church, the school. This heritage should motivate us to engage further in debates about the opportunities and limitations of education.

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[7] Westphal, 143.

[8] Angelika Nowicki-Pastuschka, *Frauen in der Reformation* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1990)

[9] Westphal, 140.

[10] Nowicki-Pastuschka, 6–7.

The Church and Same-Sex Relationships: A Case Study in Hermeneutical Ecology

John Rollefson
Lord of Light Lutheran church
Ann Arbor, Michigan

"Sexual issues are tearing our churches apart today as never before," writes Walter Wink in an article entitled "Homosexuality and the Bible." He continues:

> The issue of homosexuality threatens to fracture whole denominations, as the issue of slavery did a hundred and fifty years ago. We naturally turn to the Bible for guidance and find ourselves mired in interpretive quicksand. Is the Bible able to speak to our confusion on this issue?[1]

My experience as a pastor who has served three quite different congregations over the last quarter century and my present university congregation for more than a decade leads me to answer Wink's troubling question with a resounding "Yes!" Yes, the Bible speaks to us who gather week in and week out as church to hear God's Word and share the Supper. Moreover, it speaks in a way that has helped us as faith communities to hear a clarifying and unifying Word that is good news amid the larger church's "confusion on this issue."

This is due, in large part, to the "hermeneutical ecology" that is created by the presence in our congregation of fellow Christians who happen to be gay and lesbian. Their embodied experience of same-sex relationships, from friendships to committed partnerships, is a part of our common life in the same way as are our heterosexual relationships, from marriages to divorces, single friendships to dating and engaged couples. Homosexuality is not an "issue" that divides us but is one way of describing an aspect of the personhood of some of those among us that differentiates us and enriches our sense of diversity within the body of Christ. The presence of gay and lesbian fellow believers helps to sharpen the acuity of our listening for God's Word as we hear Jesus' imperative, "Whoever has ears to hear. . . ." Rather than being "mired in interpretive quicksand" over this "issue" in which so much of the church feels "stuck," our community witnesses to the Truth that has set us free, a liberating Word that challenges all forms of enslavement to the powers that be. It is Scripture, interpreted through the lens of our week-in-and-week-out, shared experience as a Christian community, that continues to shape our theological anthropology by keeping us in Spirited conversation with God's living Word.

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[1] *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions for the Churches*, ed. Walter Wink (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 33.

A clue from Scripture itself

"See the work of God;
for who can make straight what
God has made crooked?"
—Ecclesiastes 7:13

Choon-Leong Seow, Professor of Old Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary and editor of a collection of essays written by PTS faculty entitled *Homosexuality and Christian Community,* cites this text in support of his contention that "creation is not as orderly as one would like to believe." Particularly the wisdom tradition, he contends, while recognizing that God is the Creator of the universe,

> also concedes that God's creation does include many irregularities and unevenness—anomalies that no human being can explain or change.... Wisdom's perspective is admittedly heterodox when judged by the viewpoints of the Torah and the Prophets. The entire corpus of wisdom books defies any attempt to systematize the Old Testament in terms of a definite center. There is not one perspective in the Bible, but many.

"The Bible," Seow concludes (coining a tongue-in-cheek neologism), "is heterotextual."[2]

Further, Seow argues, the wisdom tradition's is a "theology from below (starting with the plight of humanity)" and thereby provides a "necessary counterpoint to the dominant 'theology from above'" which is often accompanied by a "thus saith the Lord." This means, Seow asserts, that "Wisdom literature is thus a persistent reminder to us that we should not be too sure that we speak for God and too slow to admit that we stand with the rest of humanity before the mysteries of God and in the face of life's contradictions."[3]

This leads to the clear implication for Seow that in "wisdom literature we are instructed not to ignore nature, science, reason and experience." Quite the opposite, the biblical wisdom tradition, Seow claims, is itself "*scriptural authority* for human beings to make ethical decisions by paying attention to science and human experiences." "We must not say," he insists, "as we often hear in the debate about homosexuality, that 'experience has nothing to do with it' or that 'only scripture matters.' It is scriptural to take human observations and experiences seriously."[4]

Patrick Miller, an Old Testament scholar and Seow's colleague at Princeton Seminary, concurs and broadens his remarks beyond the perspective of the Hebrew wisdom tradition within Scripture when he observes that "the way of human discernment and reason's sensibility in the light of the complexities we encounter is not something foreign to scripture or disdained by scripture in favor of a simple reading of texts." Rather,

> It is scripture itself that teaches us the importance of new knowledge, of the investigation of science, of the proven wisdom that comes from experience and is a part of our fear of the Lord. We tend to set the revelation of scripture condemning homosexual acts against our human desire to be open to the homosexual person and against our sense from experience that homosexuality is not finally reducible to the category of sin. ... But that tendency to trump experience with revelation comes up against scripture's own valuing of the wisdom of experience and its insistence that those

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[2] Choon-Leong Seow, "A Heterotextual Perspective," *Homosexuality and Christian Community* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 23.

[3] Seow, 24.

[4] Seow, 22.

> who fear the Lord are to take account of what knowledge and wisdom teach us.[5]

As Robert Jenson has observed in this matter, "God's creative intent" is not to be discovered "by examining the empirical situation."[6] But neither does our hearing of Scripture occur apart from our empirical location, knowledge, and life experience. As Christian ethicist Paul Jersild has written,

> Protestant Christianity rightly affirms the primacy of the Bible, compelling its continuing conversation with it. This conversation requires a careful listening to Scripture, but that listening takes place with "ears"—or minds and hearts—that bring to bear the concerns and perspectives of the church's own cultural and social world. In this process, the moral issues of the time stimulate new perspectives in understanding what Scripture and tradition have to say in relation to these issues.[7]

In this matter of homosexual relationships, Jersild further believes, "the church is being challenged to recognize that its own experience in the present moment, in which a once alienated people are being restored, is a powerful reality that cannot be denied by laws out of the past that have consigned these people to perpetual judgment." This leads to the conclusion that "our experience today as Christians in the world gives the shape and form to the questions we ask of Scripture and therefore also to the kinds of answers we discern" (pp. 135, 137).

Interestingly, Richard Hays, a vigorous advocate for the church's traditional proscription of same-sex relationships, is found to argue in his widely influential *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* that "it is crucial to remember that experience must be treated as a hermeneutical lens for reading the New Testament" and then adds the important qualifier "rather than as an independent, counterbalancing authority."[8] This is the point that I insist upon as well: that experience, as well as science and other empirical realties, are not separate sources of authority within the church but that they contribute to the creation of the "hermeneutical lens," to use Hays' metaphor, through which Scripture is not only read, but—to mix metaphors—heard and interpreted.

Alluding to the struggle described in Acts 10 and 11 through which Peter and the early church changed their mind regarding the inclusion of Gentiles previously counted "unclean" on account of Scripture, Hays acknowledges that it was "the experience of uncircumcised Gentiles responding in faith to the gospel message [that] led the church back to a new reading of Scripture." But, he insists, "only because the new experience of Gentile converts proved hermeneutically illuminating of Scripture was the church, over time, able to accept the decision to embrace Gentiles within the fellowship of God's people." So too, Hays concludes, must a reading/hearing of Scripture amid a church inclusive of gay and lesbian persons be illuminative of God's original intent in Scripture (p. 399). It is to this effort that I now turn, engaging with my congregational members in a close reading and imaginative hearing of the Yahwist creation account as encountered in the second chapter of Genesis.

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[5] Patrick Miller, "What The Scriptures Principally Teach," in *Homosexuality and Christian Community*, ed. Choon-Leong Seow (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 60.

[6] Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2 (New York: Oxford, 1999), 93.

[7] Paul Jersild, *Spirit Ethics: Scripture and the Moral Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 60.

[8] Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 399.

Discussing the Yahwist's creation account

"Then the Lord God said,
'It is not good that the man
[*adam*, the "human one" or "earthling"]
should be alone.'"

—Genesis 2:18a

The ways in which members of the congregation of which I am a part and serve as pastor hear, understand, and respond to this particular piece of Scripture taken from the Yahwist's creation account was the subject of two "focus groups" that I convened early in 2001. The first group was composed of gay and lesbian members of Lord of Light Lutheran Church (including members' partners who were not church members but were invited to attend) and the second a group composed of non-gay and non-lesbian members (also including nonmember partners/spouses). Within these two groups there was a good diversity of males and females, partnered and single (including divorced and formerly partnered), and a variety of ages represented from late teens to early sixties, numbering twenty-six persons in all. Here I will simply report on contributions made during these two conversations. (A third joint gathering was later held.)

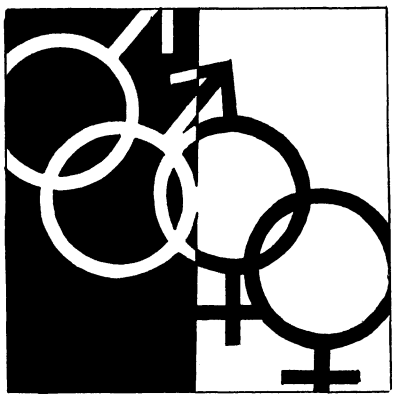
Participants were asked to read in advance the entire Yahwist creation story in Gen 2:4b–25 as well as, if time permitted, Mark 10:2–12, Jesus' pronouncement on divorce in which he cites both Genesis creation accounts. (This pairing of readings had occurred in our lectionary readings on the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.) In preparation for the conversations I had asked participants to pay special attention to Genesis 2:18a in its broader context and to reflect from their own experience on what Word they heard from God regarding the nature of our deepest human relationships.

Following a reading aloud of Gen 2:4b–25, spirited, wide-ranging conversations began, each of which was called to a halt after ninety minutes. It is impossible to generalize about the conversations, and no effort was made to determine consensus, but let me highlight a number of observations that participants made.

+ There was strong appreciation for the ironic and humorous elements of the Yahwist's account, especially the "trial and error" nature of God's parading the animals past the human one in quest of a suitable partner. In the g/l group someone commented how important pets are in the lives of some people. A genetics researcher mentioned how similar to an evolutionary understanding God's trial-and-error method sounds. This suggested to another that ours is a Creator God who is "a work in process" and not a fixed entity, as people in Scripture so often tried to confine God into being. God's own willingness to say "not good" to what God has created tells us a good bit about God beyond all the omni-this and omni-that talk.

+ What does this say about God's own aloneness in the creation of the human one and God's own need or desire for companionship? Current trinitarian thinking about the nature of God dwells a great deal on God's personal interrelationships, how relationship is integral to God's own being. This may be a dimension of what the first creation account means by humanity's being created in the image of God. Interestingly, though, it is a relationship of three rather than two that is at the heart of God's being, which leads us to be aware that relationships are a larger matter than just the "intimate other."

+ It is striking that the word "partner" is used in our text, a word commonly used



of g/l couples. The other word, "helper," struck some as a very utilitarian word even when understood in its Hebrew context and nonpatriarchal sense when referring to God as our "help and strength." One person also observed that Genesis 2, particularly in comparison with Genesis 1, presents a highly egocentric and anthropocentric view of creation.

+ Isn't it remarkable, after all the "and God saw that it was good" editorializing at the end of each day of creation, culminating in the "very good" following the creation of humankind in the first creation account, that we should find God declaring in 2:18a the divine judgment of "not good" over something that God had molded from the dust of the earth (*adamah*) and into whose nostrils had breathed the "breath of life?" We haven't gotten to chapter 3 yet and the story of the first disobedience, and yet something, the human one's aloneness, is declared by God "not good." Doesn't this signal that this is the basic concern or intention of God in this account rather than the specific narration of the making of woman and the etiology of male-female "one-flesh" coupling? "It's quite a jump," one person observed, "from 'it is not good to be alone' to 'thou shalt take a female wife if you are a man.'"

+ It is interesting that God would declare that it is "not good" for a human being to be part of a world in which there were not other humans, implying that *adam* was not yet fully human despite the rest of creation. Only secondarily does it mean partnering with another human being. A constant theme for gay/lesbian and heterosexual people alike is the desire for relationship. This text's overarching theme is that God does care for our deepest human needs; that which makes us human is our relationships. What makes us human is our sociality. We don't grow without one another. The more people we're exposed to the more diverse and creative we become. We'd be stunted without one another. A formerly Christian, now Buddhist, partner of one of our members observed that from a Buddhist perspective it would be "very weird" to be just an individual, sentient being.

+ One person commented that neither Genesis 1 nor 2 speaks to him because it is so primitive a story, so distant and remote in comparison to, for example, Jesus' story of the Prodigal Son, which we'd heard read that morning. It's a story handed down to explain something, but what authority does this old story have for us today? So many g/l people are anti-Christian. That is partly because of this text we read and how it's been used by the church.

+ Another (a classical archaeologist) commented that the church has lived through fifteen hundred years of monasticism and the assumption that we best develop a relationship with God in solitariness. Relationships were thought of as a crutch for people who weren't capable of being religious enough in the midst of everyday life. Also the need to experience aloneness was mentioned by one of our undergraduate students as a way of self-differentiating and becom-

ing a "real person" not just "absorbed" into another as sometimes happens with young girl- or boy-friends who are overly dependent on another person for their sense of identity and self-esteem.

+ Friendship was acknowledged as an underappreciated form of relationship in our culture's fascination with the "intimate other" and the church's preoccupation with marriage as the paradigm of all relationships. One person wondered aloud whether friendships among heterosexuals were as important to them as his g/l friendships. One person responded that he doubted it and remarked how his own family didn't understand the depth of his long-distance friendships. Also remarked upon was the perceived difficulty of heterosexual men having friendships with women because of sexual attraction issues.

+ One commented how there is a sense in which g/l people are able to get close quickly because they understand so much of one another's experience. "You don't have to explain so much," someone said. But that can also be deceiving, another noted, since we've all known people of whom we can say, "yes, she's a lesbian, but she's such a jerk!" It was agreed that when a primary relationship (partnership or marriage) has ended, friends become even more important. This is probably true, we agreed, of single people generally.

During and especially toward the end of each session, several people felt sufficiently secure to witness to their own experiences as members of a congregation that has been intentionally welcoming to gay and lesbian persons since the "coming out" of a valued member just over twenty-five years ago. That well-remembered event precipitated the beginning of an intentional study process on the "issue" of homosexuality that culminated in the congregation's commitment to the inclusion of sexual minority people as a sign of its hospitality (literally, in Greek, "love of the stranger") as a community of faith rooted in the gospel.

+ A long-time member of the congregation testified as to how easy it is to get into "we-they" thinking whereas "my personal experience in this congregation is that the people I sit next to in worship are people just like me who are struggling with faith issues and with God. They come to this church with the same human frailties that I do. We are no different but are all in the same need of grace. So how can anyone justify excluding them?" We are all saints and sinners, she concluded, and it is our common need that brings us together.

+ Even if we see homosexuality as a sin, an undergraduate member observed, that's not the point of the Bible. One sin isn't worse than another, but the issue of acceptance has priority. A nonmember spouse added, "Weren't Gertrude Stein's dying words, 'What was the question?'" We can't be so self-assured that we exclude others.

+ Another person observed that people in other churches haven't had as much experience of homosexual people as we do in our congregation. We say, "I love you and you love me and God loves us." So how can others say they're right when they haven't had our experience? So much of what we talk about is not what God's will is but what makes us feel ok, resulting in a confusion of faith with religion. Black-and-white thinking is so widespread in religious circles.

+ Q: Which side is the great divide over homosexuality coming from? A: From the literalists, not from us who are accepting. This is not really an issue for our congregation anymore—we may have other problems, but not this. Other things are more important. The church could get over this pretty quickly. The "other side" is taking

their stance on the Bible in a way that raises questions about their whole understanding and use of the Bible.

+ The larger church seems to focus on the sex people have—or imagines they're having! But there's no sex going on on Sunday mornings but relationships. We want the rest of the church to experience the quality of life, the good news we experience because of our acceptance of others.

+ I came out long before I joined the church, commented an undergraduate. People don't understand it. It "flips people out." On campus it's much easier to be accepted as a lesbian than as a Christian. It seems strange and confusing to others—especially to my parents who aren't Christians. "So how did you become a Christian?" becomes a big question. I came to my own relationship with God and then found a welcoming community to become a part of.

+ I didn't realize that the church and homosexuality were incompatible until somebody told me. I began to look at Scripture much differently, no longer literally. Scripture became richer. Coming out really enriched my spiritual life.

+ A word about bisexuality needs to be spoken. We go through "stuff" on the way to discovering our sexuality. It's not always a straight-ahead kind of journey. The church doesn't give people enough room to figure this all out, to discover who they are. Some of us have to go outside the "official duality" to discover this. To be so either-or isn't satisfactory.

+ If I had this ok relationship with God before I discovered my sexuality, why should my faith change as I've discovered more about myself? I see no disjunction between being a Christian and being a lesbian. I was created in the image of God, too. That's the best answer to the question of why we hang in there with the church as g/l people.

People telling their stories

"Sharing one another's stories is what it's all about. . . . You have to go out and get people's stories. You can't do theology without getting the stories of real people out there. Our stories are important to God; God gives us our stories."

"Jesus was the master story-teller."

—focus group participants

Charles Baxter's novel *The Feast of Love*, a finalist for the 2000 National Book Award, is a marvelously interwoven narrative consisting of a motley cast of characters telling their own personal stories of loving and not-so-loving relationships (broadly inspired by Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). The novel itself arises out of a 2:00 A.M. conversation on an Ann Arbor park bench that occurs between a couple of insomniacs—the author, called "Charlie," and his friend and the novel's protagonist, "Bradley." "Listen, Charlie," Bradley says to his writer-friend, who is having a tough time getting his new novel started, "I've got an idea. It'll solve all your problems and it'll solve mine. Why don't you let me talk. I'll send you people, you know, actual *people*, for a change, like for instance human beings who genuinely exist, and you listen to them for a while. Everybody's got a story, and we'll just start telling you the stories we have."

To which Charlie responds, "What do you think I am, an anthropologist?"[9]

Theological anthropology necessarily involves the "field work" of inviting actual people to tell their stories, not just any stories but their personal stories of love and human relationships as experienced and

[9] Charles Baxter, *The Feast of Love* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000), 16.

interpreted in the light of Scripture's master story. Moreover, theological anthropology is more than a mere collection of individuals' stories; it is the communal interweaving of individual narratives told and shared and reflected upon as response to the Word in the gathered *koinonia* we call "church." As Luke Johnson has put it, "If in fact theology has to do not alone with ideas but with faith in the living God, pastoral or practical theology is the research arm of theology."[10] Or, I would add, "theological anthropology." As David Bartlett put it in another context, we need "studies that help us think about how people understand texts in their relationship to communities, not just in relationship to the individual scholar. . . ."[11]

Old Testament scholar Patrick Miller insists that

> the present interpretive activity of the church be a communal one, that our efforts to think about this issue afresh and in reference to what has been thought already be a corporate engagement and not simply a matter of individual proposals for reading texts, although we may start at that point. Our interpretation happens in community, and what the community experiences in faith is more significant than the experience of any individual. What we say and do together is more to be attended to than idiosyncratic readings of texts by one or a few individuals. . . . This means listening to a broad range of interpretive judgments in the church, including its gay and lesbian members.[12]

Not all scholars share this view. Christopher Seitz, a biblical scholar who argues against relaxing the church's traditional proscription against same-sex behavior, doubts that attempts within the church to "stay in dialogue" regarding this issue will be productive. "I may be wrong," he admits, but nonetheless asserts that "what I see is a hardening of resolve on both sides and greater conviction that one's own side is right after all."[13] While personally I am not ready to give up on dialogue, I find compelling Seitz's recommendation that at the present impasse at which the church finds itself on this issue,

> it is better for us to witness to the truth and to clarify how it is we come to it, than to assume that what is confused are our sources of authority and that with just one more historical-critical work we will succeed in eliminating the confusion and persuading the other side. . . . In the meantime both sides are obliged to testify to the truth and clarify how they have come to it, without any assumption that a consensus will emerge this side of the judgment of God.[14]

You can't do theology without getting the stories of real people out there. Our stories are important to God.

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[10] Luke Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 40–44.

[11] David Bartlett, *Between the Bible and the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 159.

[12] Miller, "What The Scriptures Principally Teach," 58.

[13] Christopher Seitz, "Sexuality and Scripture's Plain Sense: The Christian Community and the Law of God," in *Homosexuality, Science and the 'Plain Sense' of Scripture,* ed. David L. Balch (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 181.

[14] Seitz, "Sexuality and Scripture's Plain Sense," 181.

Without conceding to his fatalistic judgment that "we must frankly admit that we [the church] are in schism," he is certainly right that it is God who "will judge the appeal to his word being made by both sides."[15] In fact, it is Seitz's we-they, us-them view of the church's current preoccupation with homosexuality, as noted in our focus group conversation, that seems more a unilateral declaration that the church is in schism by the defenders of the traditional position than a genuine effort to "testify to the truth" of their position in conversation with those very persons who embody the issue, namely, lesbian and gay members of the church.

Jersild views our present situation more positively as "a genuine learning moment for the church" that may well become "a time of significant growth and maturation."[16] This also is the overwhelming feeling among members of our congregation, several of whom have attended regional church forums on homosexuality led by guest theologians, gatherings that have attracted capacity crowds for Bible study and discussion such as our synod has never before experienced. Can it be a bad thing when Christians of widely varying views on the matter of homosexuality come together to worship and pray, study Scripture, and be in conversation with one another? I can testify to how important it has been in these gatherings to have gay and lesbian Christians (including members of my own congregation) present to add to the conversation with Scripture their own voices of faith, voices many from other congregations have not had opportunity to engage with in the formation of their own attitudes and opinions about this "issue."

Jersild further notes that it is the known presence of gays and lesbians as "fellow member(s) of the household of faith" that is "fundamentally changing the nature of this debate." No longer is the gay or lesbian person "simply 'the other,' one who is kept at a safe distance as a kind of leper whom it is easy to reject. . . . Whether living as singles or in partnership, Christian homosexual persons have emerged as fellow believers, witnesses to God's grace, and co-workers in the kingdom," living testimonies that "God is at work in the world, and that changes marked by greater understanding, and by the recovery of a people once repudiated and lost to the church, bear the signs of God's presence."[17]

Thomas Long, formerly Professor of Preaching and Worship at Princeton Seminary and now at Emory University, believes that "Despite countless statements and pronouncements, the larger church is probably not prepared to render a finished judgment on the matter of homosexuality." Indeed, he raises the question as to the possibility of ever coming to such a "fixed" view and argues instead that:

> The larger and worthy doctrinal goal of discerning Christian truth, believed everywhere and by all, must be nuanced by the inescapably local and congregational character of Christianity. On the horizon is the cathedral of God's truth, and we are all making pilgrimage toward it. For the time being, though, along the pilgrim path, the biblical mandate for the congregations of Galatia or Grand Rapids may not be what is biblical for the congregation of Corinth or at Jennings, Missouri.[18]

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[15] Seitz, 181.

[16] Jersild, *Spirit Ethics*, 134.

[17] Jersild, 134–35.

[18] Thomas Long, "Living With The Bible," in *Homosexuality and Christian Community*, ed. Choon-Leong Seow (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 70.

In congregational life, he observes,

> the "oracular" model of scripture is replaced by a conversational one. . . . Preaching teaching, praying, deliberating, praising, and sharing life around the coffeepot are all forms of the continuing congregational conversation, and scripture is a voice in the colloquy. Scripture is an important, authoritative, and normative voice—a "loud" voice, so to speak—but in congregational context it exerts its power conversationally and not unilaterally.[19]

Part of what this means, he continues, "is that congregations employ a broad and sophisticated hermeneutic that relates the whole and the part—the whole of congregational life to the part of a given text of scripture." Remarkably, he observes,

> This bears similarity to canonical approaches to biblical interpretation in which the textual part is often seen as part of a larger whole as manifested by the canon. Thus a text can be heard in its own right, as a voice in the chorus, but its force is modified (and sometimes mitigated) by the overarching canonical harmonies. . . . In congregations, however, the textual part is related not just to the canonical whole, but to the whole of congregational life . . . in the preaching in the sanctuary and the laughter in the churchyard, in the hymns and in the prayers and in the reading of the lessons, in the touch of a hand at hospital bedside and in the words of comfort at the communion table, in the phone calls from members and in the printed reports of denominational deliberations—in every place in that congregation's life where the voice of scripture is invited to join the confusing welter of conversation about the even more tangled business of being Christian in the midst of the human condition—it is the conviction of the church that the spirit of God speaks.

"Of course, this can be merely sentiment," Long admits, "but it can also be baptismal discernment."[20]

The conversation continues

"Well, you got your story and I got mine. Difference of opinion. I guess everybody's got a story, right?"
—Baxter, *The Feast of Love*, 264

"It is not good that the human one should be alone. —Genesis 2:18a

We hear God's story of the creation of the earthling and the divine declaration of "not good" regarding the earthling's aloneness in conversation with our own and others' yet unfinished human stories. A congregation is like a "complex, ongoing, and multifaceted conversation," Long suggests, invoking John McClure's phrase, that is "talking itself into becoming a Christian community."[21]

Martha Stortz explicates this hermeneutical ecology of the faith community further as she explains,

> There are intersecting circles of Scripture, church tradition, experience, culture, and so forth. The community needs to take seriously the witness of each of these and somehow come to a point where it can say, "It seems right to the Holy Spirit and to us." All these pieces are present and shape one another. I find that people appeal to experience as if it were raw. But experience is always already shaped, for example, by Lutheran and biblical understandings. There's enormous reflexivity between the way I read Scripture and the way Scripture "reads" me. This happens in the context of community.[22]

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[19] Long, "Living With The Bible," 72.
[20] Long, 73, 72.
[21] Long, 72.
[22] Martha Stortz, "A Table Talk on Lutheran Ethics," in *The Promise of Lutheran Ethics*, ed. Karen Bloomquist and John Stumme (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 165.

Paul Lehmann makes an important contribution to this matter from beyond the grave in his final, posthumously published work in which he reflects on the Genesis creation accounts. As Miller observes carefully, Lehmann's comments "are indicative of the fact that what *the text says does not yet tell us what it teaches; that happens only when the text is perceived from some angle of vision.* For Lehmann, as it should be for us all, that angle was the gospel, which is, in his now-familiar formulation, what God was and is doing to make and to keep human life human."[23] Lehmann's "angle" on the Genesis account is worth citing at length, paying special attention to his crucial distinction between a "limiting" and a "foundational" instance.

> [A] divine ordination is not a *limiting* instance, but a *foundational* one. As a limiting instance, the divine ordination to sexual otherness and reciprocity is put forward as the normative mode of sexuality, in relation to which variants are excluded as deviants from the heterosexual norm. As a *foundational* instance, the divine ordination to sexual otherness and reciprocity becomes the liberating instance in relation to which divergent possibilities may be pursued and assessed. As a *limiting* instance, heterosexuality necessarily excludes homosexuality from the divine purpose of and for human fulfillment. As a *foundational* instance of otherness in differentiation and commitment, inequality and heterogeneity, reciprocity and fidelity, heterosexuality becomes the liberating occasion and sign of human fulfillment in relation to which homosexuality may also be affirmed. Just as in Scripture and tradition, a central and indispensable correlation between monotheism and monogamy has been discerned and affirmed, yet without requiring the instantaneous and intransigent rejection of concubinage, polyandry or polygamy, or even interracial and/or interfaith marriage as a test case of the obedience of faith, so the foundational and liberating instance of heterosexuality as a parable of human fulfillment does not require an intransigent rejection of homosexuality as a test case of the obedience of faith.[24]

In light of Lehmann's distinction, Gen 2:18a can be seen to be an example of God's foundational and thereby liberating rather than limiting intent for humanity (negatively stated): It is *not good* for the human one to be alone. This declaration, not procreation, not sexual complementarity, not "plumbing,"[25] not the institution of marriage, not the "heterosexual order of creation,"[26] not whatever other etiologies may be found in the second creation account, however important they may be, sounds most loudly and clearly within our congregational hearing and conversation as God's original and foundational but not limiting intent from which all the rest follows. It is this Word of God that makes most sense of our collectively shared stories and that speaks to us the good and liberating news that relationship—that not being alone—marks the beginning of our being truly human and, in Lehmann's words, is what "keeps us human."

The Bible is the church's book whose peculiar authority is experienced most persuasively, compellingly, and winsomely within the life of the gathered worshiping community. The insights of biblical schol-

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[23] Miller, "What The Scriptures Principally Teach," 57; emphasis added.

[24] Paul Lehmann, *The Decalogue and a Human Future: The Meaning of the Commandments for Making and Keeping Human Life Human* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 174, cited in Miller, "What The Scriptures Principally Teach," 57–58.

[25] Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 89.

[26] See Christian Scharen, *Married in the Sight of God: Theology, Ethics and Church Debates Over Homosexuality* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 55–92.

ars and theologians working indidivually and collectively do not displace the ecclesial authority we experience within our local, living, worshiping communities that gather regularly to hear the Word and share the supper and then disperse for the sake of ministry in daily life. Our local congregations are not the whole church, but they are fully church as they confess themselves to be participants in the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church." Our local ecclesial communities are not an ideal and abstract church but are a real and embodied gathering of saints/sinners who know and care for one another and the mission of the gospel into which they have been baptized. Here God's Word speaks to the lives and within the hearts of its hearers and is heard and bears fruit—or it does not. In this sense the congregation constitutes the primary "hermeneutical ecology" to which this essay has tried to pay attention.

The preceding is far from all that needs to be said about this conflicted matter in the life of the church we call homosexuality. It is, I would argue, that area of the church's contemporary life most reflective of a theological anthropology gone awry. A place from which we might begin afresh, I believe, is with Yahweh's original "not good," with the Creator's definitive dissatisfaction not with humanity itself but with the result of the human one's being alone. This as the originating Word of our conversation with Scripture regarding the basis for our theological anthropology is one that at the very least calls into question all church rule-making that would seek to isolate people from meaningful, committed, and mutually fulfilling human relationship. It is a Word that at least one community of Christians finds to be a liberating and not limiting text that by the inspiration of the Spirit has the power to make and keep making us—but not only us—church.

A place from which we might begin afresh, I believe, is with Yahweh's original "not good. . . ."

"Blessed Are They Upon God's Holy Mountain": Reflections on Luke 6:17–26

David Berg
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

The early '60s model bus moans across the scorched and desolate African landscape. No life here. The tall grass is withered and brown. Dust hangs in the air making each breath an exercise in endurance. The road, hardly a road, suddenly descends into a dried-out riverbed where women toting children on their backs and buckets on their heads scratch and claw at the surface in search of water.

Ahh, but this is a sign of life . . . they weren't there before . . . we must be nearing the village!

Traveling for about six hours, crammed into this small, hot, broken-down vehicle, is almost more than I can stand. My mouth is parched, and I am wearing most of the red clay dirt from the surrounding landscape. These God-forsaken roads are treacherous. We fear each bump as it seems to spell certain doom to our sad little bus. Looking around at my fellow weary travelers, our diverse group makes my mind wander. We are a gospel choir with adults and children. We are African Americans, Euro Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans, yet we are all rich Americans by African standards.

Somehow one of the two children on our trip is asleep to my right, head bobbing and drooling all over her open journal. My fellow tenor section partner has his headphones blaring Dexy and the Midnight Runner's 1980s classic "Come on Eileen," totally oblivious to the fact that we hear it and are now openly questioning his musical taste. The two in front of me are yammering away in an inane conversation about card playing, and my friend in back of me has been praying nonstop since our departure that this "bus" doesn't tip over and blow up in a manner reminiscent of a 1979 episode of CHiPS—and that we won't need to jump the next riverbed like the Dukes of Hazard in the General Lee.

We are climbing higher and higher into the mountains, further away from the city. Nobody goes here by accident . . . yet the beauty is breathtaking.

The way the mountains emerge from the landscape and are framed by the hazy African July sky as if they are the handiwork of a master painter means only one thing.

God lives here.

This is God's holy mountain, as Psalm 48 proclaims: "God's holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth."

More people are walking down the road now. Dried red mud houses with thatched roofs polka-dot the surrounding field. More signs of life. My boredom and

frustration turn to intrigue, as all on the bus straighten up and anxiously look about. Headphones are turned off, and we are uncharacteristically quiet as an electric excitement charges the stale air of our bus. Suddenly, we enter a small village.

We are met by shrieks of joy that no imitator could do justice to. African women run toward us with arms flailing above their heads, singing songs in Swahili and launching into an embrace with each one of us as we get off the bus. We are there no more than five seconds, and we are no longer strangers.

They know who created us. We are children of that same Creator, and we are here to commune with one another on that Creator's front stoop—on God's Holy Mountain.

Sensory overload.

The colors are hypnotizing: the women are adorned with clothes of the deepest blues and purples and scorching reds and yellows. Arm in arm they lead us to the church, a humble, small, four-walled concrete structure with small openings to let light and air in. Upon entering, we encounter a spread of food that is a sight to behold—mounds of spinach, chicken, bananas, potatoes, stew, rice, and several crates of Coca-Cola to quench our parched mouths. We are *starved!* After a word of thanks is offered, we descend upon the food like a pack of crazed dogs. In this culture, the guests eat first, and then the hosts eat what is left.

We load our plates to the breaking point.

I begin to fill the void of my 220-pound frame with this veritable feast. Very few people ever eat meat in Tanzania, as it is too expensive, but there is plenty of meat to be had today for us, the honored American guests. Just as Jesus told the parable of a father who slaughtered the fatted calf upon the return of his long-lost prodigal son, the goat and the chicken were offered for the long-lost brothers and sisters in Christ.

As I plunk down yet another chicken bone and prepare to throw back my head and unleash a "barbaric yawp" of romp'n stomp'n food eat'n satisfaction, I notice a child standing just outside the door, covered with dirt, wearing a simple smock, and possessing a bloated belly, a telling sign of malnutrition. To give her a plate of food would be a sign of disrespect and dishonor in this society.

I feel nauseous and ashamed.

Suddenly a band begins warming up—Really! An electric base and electric guitar start jamming what I recognize as an island beat, while a hand drum keeps the time. Suddenly it dawns on us: there is no electricity in this village. The guitars and the drum are handmade by the youth of the congregation. The amplifier, also handmade, is powered by twenty D batteries.

More shrieks of joy echo through the small stone church. A crowd of women burst through the doorway with ear-to-ear grins, clapping and singing: "*Asante Sana Jesu—Asante Sana Jesu—Asante Sana Jesu Mo Yo Nee*"—which means, "Thank you Jesus, Thank you Jesus, Thank you Jesus from my heart."

The band picks up and a concert ensues upon God's holy mountain. The buffet has disappeared—but the little girl with the bloated belly has not.

She is dancing!

She dances with a desire and resolve the likes of which few of us have ever seen. We all raise a joyful noise combining African music and Gospel music, and her feet skip across the notes landing only on the occasional down beat.

The pace of the clapping quickens. A conga line begins, and Africans along with us Americans move, weaving like a snake

around the seats, singing, dancing, and laughing—all to the glory of God—upon God's holy mountain.

As the shadows grow outside, the music gives way to stories. One church leader explains that they have raised the equivalent of about $50 to buy two bikes. The teenagers use them to pedal into the surrounding countryside and share the gospel and evangelize. As a result, this small Lutheran church, only about three years old, has grown to over six hundred people worshiping on any given Sunday. As I look around, I notice that the windows have community members standing three deep, peering in and listening to the stories. The little girl I have been noticing is sitting with the other children. They are all shoeless, with tattered clothes and some apparently suffering of malnutrition. Once again, I feel my stomach turn. The members of the church are making an appeal for money to fund their ministry, so our group passes around a hat.

For about two years we have been raising funds to go to Africa. We've raised money to pay for our airfare, lodging, and a few meals. In addition, each member has brought about $400 extra for souvenirs and other expenses on our three week journey. The average Tanzanian earns around $250 to $300 a year. When the hat reaches the last person in our group, we count the money and present them the equivalent of about $25. I shrink in embarrassment at the meager gift. The Africans jump up, dance, and sing songs of joy to us upon God's holy mountain.

It is now a few days later, and our three-week tour of Tanzania, Africa, is coming to a close. We are even more tired, weary, cold, dirty, and hungry. We have the good fortune of being able to go on safari. Our lodging to this point has been meager at best. The previous night I had used a bath towel as my only blanket to guard against the chilly 45-degree temperature. When we arrive at the safari hotel, the opulence is astounding. Bellhops offer us freshly squeezed orange juice to quench our thirst from the dusty road. We are then ushered into a fabulous dining room and served a fine, seven-course meal. Once we are fed, brand new Land Rovers whisk us off to the National Park, where we witness the unbridled beauty of God's diverse creation.

We admire giraffes, elephants, and zebras that are so close to our vehicle we can almost touch them. All of us on the Land Rover are abuzz with excitement and awe. In this one moment we feel connected, realizing that we are indeed a small part of this wonderful creation in which all God's creatures live—in this one moment in time—in harmony. God has created each of us, and has created each of us, in the words of Genesis 1, "good."

Psalm 139 says of God,

. . . it was you who formed
my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully
and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well. (vv. 13–14)

Suddenly I recall the little girl from mere days before, literally starving, with almost no clothes, living in a landscape bearing little water, and in almost total isolation.

I lived with her in her need. I lived with the richness and splendor of the safari.

It is the same God.

The same God created this malnourished, starving child as created this plush, fertile land of staggering life and diversity.

It is the same God.

The same God who created and blessed me with riches, education, and opportunity

also created the starving people who made sure I was fed first.

It is indeed the same God.

Hear Luke 6:17–26:

> 17 He came down with them and stood
> on a level place, with a great crowd of
> his disciples and a great multitude of
> people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and
> the coast of Tyre and Sidon. 18 They
> had come to hear him and to be healed of
> their diseases; and those who were
> troubled with unclean spirits were cured.
> 19 And all in the crowd were trying to
> touch him, for power came out from him
> and healed all of them. 20 Then he
> looked up at his disciples and said:
> "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours
> is the kingdom of God. 21 "Blessed are
> you who are hungry now, for you will be
> filled. "Blessed are you who weep now,
> for you will laugh. 22 "Blessed are you
> when people hate you, and when they
> exclude you, revile you, and defame
> you on account of the Son of Man. 23
> Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for
> surely your reward is great in heaven;
> for that is what their ancestors did to the
> prophets. 24 "But woe to you who are
> rich, for you have received your conso-
> lation. 25 'Woe to you who are full now,
> for you will be hungry. 'Woe to you who
> are laughing now, for you will mourn
> and weep. 26 'Woe to you when all
> speak well of you, for that is what their
> ancestors did to the false prophets.

We are no longer strangers with anyone. We are all children of the same Creator God.

We are no longer strangers with anyone. We are all children of the same Creator God.

As the haunting, unpleasant, and ugly images of our lives dwell simultaneously with those of unparalleled beauty and breath-taking greatness, may we follow the example of our Creator God who was made known to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ . . . and may we feed those who hunger, and help turn weeping into laughter, and walk in solidarity with those who are oppressed and persecuted—and may the reality of the kingdom of God be known in our world today.

Stewardship and War's Collateral Damage

Jerry L. Schmalenberger
ELCA Global Mission Volunteer and Visiting Professor of Practical Theology, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hong Kong
Foster father of three Viet Nam veterans and grandfather of five draft age grandsons

Petek Philippe Genene watches have a magazine ad that pictures a father embracing his young son. Below the picture are these words: "You never actually own a Patek Philippe, you merely look after it for the next generation." That is what is meant by stewardship. It is managing something not our own. It is taking responsibility to care for people, things, and the nonhuman world as if they belonged to us.

In Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio is the steward of Olivia. That means he managed her affairs and properties on her behalf. They did not belong to him, but he was to care for them as if they did. Makers of Petek Philippe watches understand that stewardship concept and use it well to sell their watches.

We who occupy this universe right now are its stewards. We must, on God's behalf, care for the people, natural resources, mental and physical health, social programs, and conservation, not only because of the resource inheritance of future generations but also because all of this does not belong to us in the first place. Like past generations, we use it for a while and then depart, handing it over to the next generation.

Christian, Muslim, and Hebrew Scriptures speak of our role as stewards of God's, Allah's, and Yahweh's creation. In the Koran it is mentioned in Khalifah 33:72. In the Bible there are twenty-six direct references to stewards. In the Old Testament, the steward is the servant of a royal personage, a foreman who must make decisions, manage, give directions, and assume responsibility for others. The steward is not irreplaceable, nor the final authority. He is responsible for his position to the owner of the people, properties, and resources he has been charged to manage.

For Christians, in the New Testament, the steward is also pictured as a servant-manager of things and persons not belonging to him. In Luke 12:48b we learn that this super authority is also a greater responsibility. Douglas John Hall calls stewardship the summing up of the Christian life.[1] And even though it is a Christian idea in North America, those outside the Christian tradition, like secular humanists and many scientists, champion the concept.

John Muir, the great conservationist and father of America's national parks,

[1] Douglas John Hall's *The Steward: A Bibical Symbol Come of Age* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990) is a foundational work on the theology of stewardship.

claims that there is an even "deeper stewardship." He wrote in his personal journal that we are faithful stewards of creation simply because it belongs to God.[2]

When we go to war, there are tremendous stewardship implications for people of any faith. We rarely hear this mentioned today as the "war on terrorism" proceeds. Consider the stewardship of our natural resources, human lives, and social programs and the cost to future generations.

Perhaps the most obvious stewardship collateral damage is in the waste and consumption of our natural resources in order to fight a war. Ponder what it takes just to transport the hardware, munitions, and people. Then there are the resources used up to shoot, torpedo, mine, and bomb. Consider all the natural resources and plants and animals polluted and destroyed—like those we saw pictured in the Gulf war. Then there are the materials needed to rebuild. In the United States we may be tempted to sacrifice all our stewardship of the environment and conservation efforts in the name of patriotism and the war effort—something some have wanted all along and are now using this (so far) popular war to accomplish.

The financial cost needs to be looked at as well. In a hungry, starving world, is it the best stewardship to put our money on getting revenge on a whole country for what a few did on September 11? Then there will be the cost of rebuilding what we are now destroying. It is expensive to fight a war. We mortgage our grandchildren in doing so. The stewardship issue here is whether this is the best use of our tax dollars. Or is it shifting to a new set of priorities that abandons paying down the national debt and making the retirement of future citizens secure? There are billions paid to corrupt governments to be on "our" side. "Enduring freedom" soon becomes enduring debt and wasteful spending.

> Whenever a nation or nations go to war, they mortgage the lives of future generations.

The financial cost of additional security in the U.S. because of the hate we are generating overseas will be enormous and enduring as well.

The Greek word in the New Testament for stewardship is *oikonomos,* from which we get our English word economics. It is a word for the one who plans and administers a household. I submit that household economics are terribly wasteful in any war, but especially this one.

Consider the human cost. There is the most obvious, which are those who are killed whatever their nationality, race, or religion. There are the millions displaced, with family life, vocation, and education disrupted. There are the many children without a parent for a period of time or for the rest of their lives. And there are those who learn a life of crime and corruption in refugee camps, and millions whose mental and physical health is damaged for the next fifty years! There are those who will develop addictions and behavioral habits of using violence to settle frustration or get

[2] Muir's handwritten journals may be seen at his home, now a historic site, in Martinaes, California, and at the Muir archives located in the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California.

revenge. The stewardship of collateral damage in human lives is enormous. The deployment of human woman- and manpower is wasteful in the light of all the other things that could be accomplished.

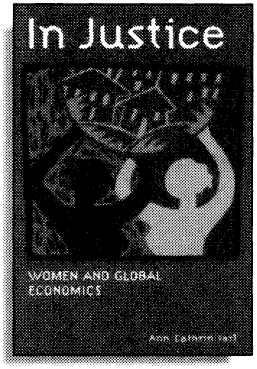
Whenever a nation or nations go to war, they mortgage the lives of future generations. They will have to deal with the reservoir of hate, racism, and religious bigotry fostered by the always-present propaganda. The widening gap between East and West, Muslim and Christian, will linger with us for years. Of course, there is the financial cost and debt, which will have to be paid by those who come after us. The collateral damage continues on and on for many years. Can we as stewards justify this disregard for the future of the global family?

Our progress as a free nation with a social responsibility (stewardship) for all citizens and noncitizens is also jeopardized. As stewards of all God's/ Allah's/ Yahweh's family, we have already seen the concept of human rights eroded in the name of security. And we have downplayed the human rights of other countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the Northern Alliance in order to coax them to join us in this global coalition against terrorism. Social programs are often sacrificed in order to expend that energy on war instead. Research, education, talents, and even our precious time can be wasted in the poor stewardship of collateral damage.

It is a grand concept the religious and nonreligious can embrace. We are stewards of this world. It is our responsibility to care for creation and all the created. It isn't ours in the first place. It is like Shakespeare's Malvolio, who is responsible for Olivia, or the owner of a Petek Philippe Genene watch, who cares for it for the next generation. The stewardship implications are huge when we calculate in war's collateral damage for years to come.

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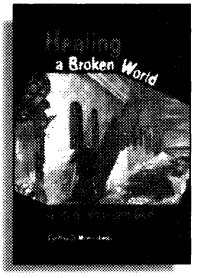
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Book Reviews

The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation. By Margaret M. Mitchell. Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox, 2002. xxxiv and 564 pages. Paper. $44.95.

John Chrysostom, premier interpreter in the tradition of Antioch, admirer of Paul, gets a fitting interpreter in Margaret Mitchell, Associate Professor of New Testament at the University of Chicago. Chrysostom was trained in rhetoric by Libanius, the foremost rhetorician of his day. He uses these resources in his homilies and commentaries. Mitchell controls New Testament studies, is deeply immersed in classical rhetoric, well read in patristics, and knowledgeable in art history and late antiquity—all disciplines useful in interpreting John of the Golden Mouth.

Mitchell focuses on John's interpretation of Paul in a number of ways. After surveying the sources and modern literature on John in chapter 1, she discusses the ancient iconography of John and Paul (she includes six plates), in chapter 2. The following chapters detail the way in which John describes Paul, both in "miniature portraits of Paul" via epithets and in detailed descriptions, both somatic and psychic (encomiastic). She makes use of his commentaries, but above all of his seven encomiastic homilies on praise of Paul. (She provides a translation of them in an appendix.) In chapter 6 she describes how standard epideictic motifs are used in describing Paul's biography and virtues.

The final two chapters discuss John in contrast to other patristic views of Paul, for example Augustine's. John writes an encomium, not a life of Paul, treating Paul as the model of Christian virtues, while Augustine sees Paul as one struggling to arrive at a fully Christian existence. For him Paul is "neither a man of lust nor an angel of perfection." Mitchell finally points out how much modern scholars have to learn from Chrysostom; like John, modern interpreters are influenced by the culture around them as they produce their "portraits" of Paul. Thus Mitchell seeks to do more than patristic archaeology; her study of John raises hermeneutical issues that are relevant to contemporary scholarship.

This massive work of scholarship, heavily documented from ancient sources both literary and iconographic, is impressive. It should dominate the study of John as exegete for the next generation. Carefully structured, impressively argued, fully documented, and illuminated by clear and at times delightful writing, I hope many will turn to it who might otherwise think it belongs only to the specialized field of patristics. It is a significant contribution to Pauline studies.

Mitchell's work was originally published in hardcover as volume 40 of the series Hermeneutische Untersuchungenen zur Theologie (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2000) at a much higher price. We owe great thanks to the American publishers for making this affordable printing available.

Edgar Krentz

Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God. By Cynthia D. Moe-Lobea. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002. xiv and 236 pages. Paper. $20.00.

The central thrust of this book is a plea for demystifying and resisting the reigning model of economic globalization and forging alternatives using resources from Christian faith/theology. The reigning model tends to ignore and even erase certain people as well as communities considered insignificant for the growth and prosperity of free trade/market. It even threatens Earth's life systems and the cultural integrity and diversity of human communities.

Because globalization has a firm grip on human communities, challenging its power is a formidable task. Moe-Lobea particularly emphasizes that the finance/market-driven globalization has weakened the moral capacity of seeing, telling, and standing for truth and has led

to acquiescence among people. This moral-spiritual crisis has made Christians forget who they are called to be: "being-in-community-of-life, crafting ways of life that enable Earth and its inhabitants to flourish" (p. 69). She gives a wakeup call to those who have not fully realized these consequences of globalization. Because the existing globalization is humanly constructed, it is transformable through human efforts. Further, Christians do have moral-spiritual resources in their tradition provided they are prepared to critically reappropriate their tradition and commit themselves for theological renewal. Christians therefore should not lose heart in the face of such a planetary responsibility.

For proposing alternatives, she draws on her own Lutheran heritage—Martin Luther, and her theological stance of feminist liberationist. Reappropriating Luther's theological insight of "indwelling God," she commends as a source of moral-spiritual power a "subversive moral agency" for resisting, revisioning, and rebuilding alternatives to the dominant paradigm of globalization. For Luther, moral is the center of faith. Social welfare is "the liturgy after a liturgy," that is, social engagement of people flowing from worship. "Human moral power flows primarily from deep communion between God, human creatures, and the broader community of life" (p. 103). The realization of this "cosmic communion" should enable Christians to live differently than what is dictated by globalization forces.

The author has carefully thought out and researched the issues related to contemporary globalization and its impact on people around the globe. As one who was engaged in the Policy Education Project of the Center for Global Education, she deals with the subject not only from an academic point of view but also with ministerial enthusiasm. The concluding section, entitled "Methodological Guideposts," discusses ethical implications in pursuing the vision expounded in the book. It is a rich resource for discussion and reflections in congregational, synodical, and other pedagogical institutions where faith perspectives are taken seriously into account. The insights from this book will be further strengthened if supplemented with discussion on the nature of catholicity of the Christian community and how Christians in their search for alternative community include people of other faiths and persuasions as part of this new humanity, envisaging life together in a "community of communities."

H. S. Wilson
Wartburg Theological Seminary

Healing Violent Men: A Model for Christian Communities. By David L. Livingston. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002. 129 pages. Paper. $17.00.

Livingston addresses a subject most would like to pass up: the origins and treatment of domestic violence within the Christian community.

He begins by laying the theological groundwork for his model: reconciliation and restoration for all involved in domestic violence, including the perpetrators. He posits that "forgiveness is communal" and that the core of reconciliation is: "[even when] a human has become so distorted and disfigured by egoism, rage, despair and fear, that person will be embraced by the Christian community" (p. 65). This idea may seem radical to those who have seen the church respond either by ignoring the violent situation or by seeing the violent spouse and/or the family leave the congregation.

The author goes on to outline the dynamics, stages, and cycles of domestic violence. He stresses that the overriding dynamic is the perpetrator's need for power and control. Livingston combines developmental psychology and cultural anthropology to explain the psychological and social processes at the root of domestic violence. Of particular interest are his arguments that the roots of violence come from a cultural heritage of patriarchy that has marginalized women as psychological extensions of men. In such a heritage, men are socialized into "emotional illiteracy" and are given only anger as an acceptable way of expressing emotion. He argues that boys are socialized via a "gender dance" (p. 36) that reinforces aggression as a way of proving ability and manhood.

In the third chapter Livingston asks whether Christianity "throws gas on the flames of violence." He argues that the church should not

assume the goal of reunion for the batterer and his family as a "quick fix" but rather should help the batterer move toward nonviolence via the intervention of men and women trained in the dynamics of domestic violence. He examines how the church has subtly contributed to the cultural and religious expectation that the victim of battering stay with the batterer. Livingston lays open a Christian theology that tends to endorse dominant roles for men (and which at times in history endorsed the punishment of the wife) and insists that the marital bond not be broken for any reason. This male-dominant theology, along with an attitude that denied or minimized domestic violence and that many times used scriptural "proof texting" to command wifely submission, has led to not only physical but also sexual abuse. Livingston asks for a reexamination of these theological underpinnings and a rethinking of reconciliation, meaning re-conciliation with the community who is alienated by the violence rather than reunion with the battered.

The final chapters of the book lay out the author's model of treatment. Livingston advocates a move away from a reunion-as-reconciliation model and toward a "layers of healing" model that calls for accountability without demonization. These layers, borrowed from Aquinas, include a process of contrition (empathy toward the victims and recognition of the need to change), confession (via individuals and groups who act both as confessor and "reality checks"), satisfaction (actions taken to heal the wound towards the battered, the batterer, and the community, with an eye toward keeping the victims safe) and absolution (declaring God's love and mercy, along with a call for never-ending vigilance and responsibility).

The author finishes the book with appendices that are solid practical guides for clergy and church staff. These appendices deal with the identification and treatment of the batterer and offer a great Web site bibliography.

This book is unlike other pastoral counseling books I have read. It is difficult to read it neutrally, and it may be a painful read for some. The author's core idea of reconciliation that includes the batterer may be difficult to grasp and understand. The church has indeed tended to discount and marginalize the victims of domestic violence as well as the perpetrator. The idea that the Christian faith demands that both be cared for and restored to community (vs. containment) can be hard to accept. Nonetheless, domestic violence is an issue that confronts clergy, church workers, and the members of all church communities, and this book is an outstanding resource, both theologically and practically.

Jim Galezewski
Elmhurst College
Chicago, Illinois

Theologies in the Old Testament. By Erhard S. Gerstenberger. Translated by John Bowden. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002. x and 358 pages. Cloth. $30.00.

It is with a prophetic tone that Erhard Gerstenberger has authored this recent contribution to Old Testament theology. In the wake of similar works (among others, Walter Brueggemann's in 1997), Gerstenberger takes a decidedly different approach to theology in the Old Testament, as reflected in the title. His theological motivation is not to synthesize the Old Testament witness into theological themes or a single theology but rather to highlight the diversity of theological systems that are at play within the Old Testament. It is in light of this diversity that he reads the Old Testament theologically for the present world.

The foundation for his work is the social-scientific study of the ancient world, specifically the diverse worlds represented in the Old Testament. For Gerstenberger, sociocultural context is a, if not the primary, factor for shaping religious belief and practice. In his rigorous treatment of the social-scientific evidence, he identifies five developmental stages of Old Testament culture that provide the outline of his argument: family and clan; village community; tribal alliance; kingdom; and exilic/postexilic community. From the family/clan, which he identifies as the initial polytheistic centre of Israelite religion, to the exilic/postexilic times, which had the final stamp on the textual witness, Gerstenberger identifies radical changes in both

the number and images of god(s) worshiped.

Gerstenberger's understanding of the Old Testament is so rooted in sociocultural context that it is difficult at times to find a common theological thread other than the contextuality of all concepts of god. This said, one common denominator is that the world as a whole is in need of redemption. All else, including the one-God confession of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4f.), is up for debate because of the sociocultural gap between the Old Testament worlds and today. Summarizing his goal, he states: ". . . in seeking to be responsible to the God of the present or the ground of being, it is our task to try to engage in constant, corrective dialogue with the old witnesses; we must look for the new form and formulation of faith which is valid today, appropriate to present conditions and human groupings, and 'right' for them" (p. 279).

This contextual approach to faith and theology begs the question of the nonnegotiable. What, if anything, about the biblical witness or tradition is nonnegotiable? What, if anything, is essential? What is shared between the Old (and New) Testament theologies and theologies of today? It is here that Gerstenberger's *Theologies* stands most exposed. At the same time, his focus on the contextuality of the Old Testament witness is where he has the most to offer. Reading the diversity and sociocultural embeddedness of the Old Testament witness encourages contemporary theologians to dialogically engage and correct, among other things, the intrinsic patriarchy of the text.

In the end, Gerstenberger's is a provocative voice in current Old Testament scholarship. If nothing else, he calls the church to theologize in its contemporary global context in dialogue with the theologies of the Old Testament. Time and further critical examination will tell what the affect of his contextual theology of the Old Testament will be on academia and church.

Samuel D. Giere
St. Mary's College
University of St. Andrews

Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching. By Craig Alan Satterlee. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002. xxiv and 391 pages. Paper. $34.95.

What is mystagogical preaching? It is preaching on the "mysteries," that is, the sacraments, as experienced by those baptized and communed at the Easter Vigil, preaching based on the sacraments as texts, presented during Eastertide and designed to shape the life of those just initiated into the church. This book holds up the method of Ambrose of Milan as the model for such preaching.

The author is the Axel Jacob and Gerda Maria (Swanson) Carlson Assistant Professor of Homiletics and co-director of the doctor of Ministry program at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. An ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, he previously taught homiletics and liturgics at the University of Notre Dame.

Mystagogical preaching was the practice of the church of the latter part of the fourth century and grew out of the church's special situation in initiating people into the life of the church after baptism. It was the custom, as exemplified by the emperor Constantine, to delay baptism as long as possible, sometimes until the death bed, so that the holy life expected of the baptized would not interfere with the responsibilities expected by the government or business or the army. Ambrose, the leading government official in Milan, was not baptized until after his surprise election by the people as their bishop.

Ambrose expected those who wished to be baptized to announce their intention at the beginning of Lent and then to participate in instruction as catechumens throughout the season of Lent. The instruction focused not on baptism or the Eucharist but on the moral life that was expected of the baptized. The rites were part of the *Disciplina Arcani,* the secret disciplines of the church, too holy to be discussed before they were experienced.

Once the rites had been experienced, they had to be explained. For Ambrose that was the purpose of mystagogical preaching. He required those newly initiated into the life of the church to be present twice a day for worship and instruc-

tion each day of Easter week. The sermons at the worship used the liturgical rites as the text to move the initiated to live the life they had experienced in baptism and the Eucharist. In separate chapters Satterlee presents the substance of Ambrose's preaching as drawn from his extant works, *De Sacramentis* and *De Mysteriis.*

In a concluding chapter Satterlee argues for making Ambrose's method of mystagogical preaching a model for such preaching in our own time. He describes the baptismal and eucharistic liturgy as practiced one Easter in St. Timothy Lutheran Church, the congregation he served as pastor. Then he gives us the content of the sermons preached during the Sundays of Eastertide, demonstrating his use of Ambrose's model.

Ambrose is cited in the Lutheran symbols as one of the Church Fathers whose teaching is evidence that the teaching of the symbols is in harmony with catholic teaching of every age. Those of us who confess the Lutheran symbols as our own have much to learn from the renowned bishop of Milan. Ambrose's insistence that preaching is for the purpose of transforming the life of the hearer rather than for the instruction of the mind has much to say to us for our preaching today. We also can learn much from his interweaving of liturgy and faith in preaching.

But there are problems with Ambrose's mystagogy. While Satterlee makes a good case for the similarities between the culture of Ambrose's day and our own, there are major cultural differences. *Disciplina arcani* do not exist in the church of our time, and so there is no reason why interpretation of the rites of baptism and the Eucharist should be postponed until after they have been experienced. For sound educational reasons they need to be interpreted again and again before and after they are first experienced.

Nor is the fourth-century system of the catechumenate a reality for the church in our time. Baptism of children and infants is still the norm in spite of the strange arguments against it. If Ambrose is right that baptism effects faith (Luther held the same), then why should children have to wait until they grow up before they experience the saving benefit of baptism? Like the church of the fourth century, we need to find ways of involving all who are candidates for baptism and their families in the life-changing events of baptism and the Eucharist.

John H. Tietjen
Fort Worth, Texas

The Samuel Scroll from Qumran. 4QSam restored and compared to the Septuagint and 4QSam. By Andrew Fincke. Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah XLIII. Leiden: Brill, 2001. viii and 329 pages. Cloth. $133.00.

4QSam, containing parts of 1 and 2 Samuel, is one of the most important of the Dead Sea Scrolls since its readings that differ from the Masoretic Text are often supported by the Old Greek Septuagint, made in the second century B.C.E., or by proto-Lucianic Greek readings, generally thought to come from the first century B.C.E.

While the definitive edition of these fragments is being prepared by Donald W. Parry and Frank Moore Cross, the present volume presents all the readings preserved on those fragments, assigns them a location in reconstructed columns of the text, and shows how these readings compare with the Masoretic Text and with Septuagintal readings and with the text of Josephus. All of the Greek witnesses are translated into Hebrew for this edition.

Until the Parry-Cross volume appears, this could be the best access most scholars would have to these Qumran fragments of Samuel. It needs to be noted, however, that the author provides only four pages of introduction to what is really a very daring, even risky reconstruction that cries out for a lengthy explanation and justification. It is not clear to me from the sparse introduction why only seventeen of the reconstructed columns are presented in standard Hebrew typeface, while they and the rest of the columns are also presented in plates that print the text in a typeface designed to look like the script of 4QSam. It also is not explained why some columns are given Roman numerals while others are labelled with non-Roman numbers. There is

no index to indicate where 4QSam is cited, let alone why 4QSam is not included at all. There are also a surprising number of typing errors in a book devoted to textual criticism.

But the strangest and most controversial feature of this book is that the author has reconstructed what might have been originally present in every line of the scroll, before the worms ate the vast majority of the text. In columns 1 and 7, for example, only parts of four lines are actually preserved on the leather, but Fincke provides the complete Hebrew text for all thirty-seven lines of both columns. How could one possibly know what was on any individual line if no part of that line is preserved, or if no part of many lines before or after it is preserved? For lines with no Qumran readings, does one just reproduce the Masoretic Text, or does one reproduce the Septuagint? The author also does not explain by what method he retroverted the Greek text back into Hebrew. An unwary user might get the very wrong impression that 4QSam is preserved almost throughout the books of Samuel, whereas in fact only the words underlined in this edition actually appear on the leather, with all the rest being very arbitrary reconstructions.

Not only might textual critics be led astray by this book, but it is by no means clear why Fincke reconstructed every line in every column in the first place. There is some value to know where the fragment might have appeared within the original columns of this scroll, but surely no one would expect his lengthy, multi-line reconstructions to have any semblance of accuracy.

Textual critics who want to use the Samuel scrolls can find quite useful information included amid all this confusion. But why would not an editor of this volume or the publisher insist on some kind of methodological control before publishing such an expensive book?

Ralph W. Klein

A Credible Jesus: Fragments of a Vision. By Robert W. Funk. Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2002. 184 pages. Paper. $18.00.

Robert W. Funk has made a powerful impact on New Testament scholarship, especially perhaps for his studies on the parables of Jesus as metaphor. As secretary of the Society of Biblical Literature (1968–73) his influence on the growth of collective American New Testament scholarship was immeasurable. Now he is better known as the founder of The Jesus Seminar. His most recent presentation of the Seminar's work, *Honest to Jesus*, is a forerunner for *A Credible Jesus*, which is a popularization—or, in modern publishing parlance, a "reader accessible" version—of *Honest to Jesus*.

Speakers, teachers, and the interested public will find it easy to follow and quite stimulating. Using the Jesus Seminar's translations (*The Complete Gospels*), Funk assembles "fragments" that illuminate basic categories of Jesus' vision such as the realm of God, trust, celebration, social transcendence, and kinship. In a chapter entitled "An Alternative Reality" Funk pulls together in a remarkable way all the teaching of Jesus about the domain of God. He lists (in short form) all the admonitions and injunctions of Jesus (i.e., love your enemies, turn the other cheek). This is followed by a list of all the pronouncements (i.e., God's domain is present but invisible; the first are last, the last first). And finally he discusses briefly God's rule as seen in the parables. For those readers who attend to the teachings of Jesus, this assembly of short pithy sayings will create a deep impression. Funk has done us a fine service.

Scholars who share the convictions of Funk and the Jesus Seminar normally struggle with at least three supposed elements of the received Jesus tradition: apocalypticism, demonology, and growing ecclesiasticism. From the beginning Funk made it clear that the real problem in such a study was to move between the Jewish background of Jesus and the church's use of Jesus tradition (p. 4). Many readers find the Funk solution unsatisfactory. Jesus did come out of an apocalyptic background and did deal with demons and unclean spirits. How should we understand the Jesus tradition at that point?

Funk is happy the Enlightenment did away with belief in demons (p. 105). That hardly does away with the function of demons in the Jesus healing narratives. We might well wonder why Funk doesn't acknowledge his own remythologizing of apocalypticism (e.g., as reversal of expectations; see pp. 96–102) and demonology (e.g. intense individualism; see p. 160). In short, Funk has produced a book both stimulating and frustrating.

Graydon F. Snyder
Chicago, Illinois

Discipleship. By Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 4. Edited by Geffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey. Translated by Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001. xv and 367 pages. Cloth. $48.00.

"Like ravens we have gathered around the carcass of cheap grace. From it we have imbibed the poison which has killed the following of Jesus among us. The doctrine of pure grace experienced an unprecedented deification. The pure doctrine of grace became its own God, grace itself. Luther's teachings are quoted everywhere, but twisted from their truth into self-delusion. . . . A people became Christian, became Lutheran, but at the cost of discipleship, at an all-too-cheap price. Cheap grace had won" (p. 53).

This provocative indictment first made by Bonhoeffer in 1937 may still be the most important theological challenge that Lutheran Christians need to answer. As we live comfortably in this time of prosperity, millions of others suffer from hunger, homelessness, violence, and hatred. Justification means the death of the sinner and the resurrection of a disciple. Bonhoeffer's hyper-Lutheran interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount in this classic book calls the church to die with Christ to self and to live with Christ in discipleship. Grace is only grace in close identification of the believer with Christ's own life, death, and resurrection. When we bless the status quo apart from repentance and new life in Christ, we perpetuate cheap grace.

Speaking retrospectively, Bonhoeffer himself recognized the danger of this book. Misinterpreted, it plunges the church back into the intolerable and oppressive legalism against which Luther rebelled. At the same time, Bonhoeffer stood by what he wrote. The consequence of cheap grace has been a complacent church, dulled as by a narcotic.

This is a new translation of the German critical edition of Bonhoeffer's text. The newness of the translation is underscored by the title, *Discipleship*, a more accurate rendering of the original title than *The Cost of Discipleship*. This version includes an excellent Introduction to the English edition by Geffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, an Afterword from the German edition by Martin Kuske and Ilse Toedt, a Chronology, extensive bibliographies, and indices of scriptural references, names, and subjects. Like the other volumes in the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works project, this one is designed not only for the interested reader but also for the critical scholar. The publication of this critical edition in English will serve generations of future students of the life and theology of Bonhoeffer. Hopefully, it will also be possible to publish a popular version of this translation in the near future to make it available to a wider circle of readers than those who invest in the critical edition. The new translation is noticeably improved.

The witness of Bonhoeffer has made significant impact throughout the world on both ordinary people and scholars. His intense concentration on the person of Christ accompanied by a life of integrity is a compelling combination. Heed once more the words of Bonhoeffer, presented in this new translation: "But do we know that this cheap grace has been utterly unmerciful against us? Is the price that we are paying today with the collapse of the organized churches anything else but an inevitable consequence of grace acquired too cheaply? We gave away preaching and sacraments cheaply; we performed baptisms and confirmations; we absolved an entire people, unquestioned and unconditionally; out of human love we handed over what was holy to the scornful and unbelievers. We poured out rivers of grace without end, but the call to rigorously follow Christ was seldom heard" (pp. 53f.). How do we respond to this cry?

Craig L. Nessan

The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. Translated by Charles Arand, Eric Gritsch, Robert Kolb, James Schaaf+, Jane Strohl, and Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000. xii and 774 pages. Cloth. $45.00. Also available on CD-ROM for $39.00.

The Book of Concord is a collection of creeds, confessions, and teachings that provide the normative doctrines of the Lutheran Church. The collection of 10 documents (The Three Ecumenical Creeds, The Augsburg Confession, Apology of the Augsburg Confession, The Smalcald Articles, Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, The Small Catechism, The Large Catechism, and Formula of Concord) was originally published on the 50th anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession on June 25, 1580. This is the fifth English translation, replacing the one edited by Theodore E. Tappert that was published in 1959. Prior to that were the Henkel edition of 1851, the Jacobs edition of 1882, and the *Concordia Triglotta* of 1921. This is an extensively revised translation, based on the Tappert edition and the 11th edition of the German *Bekenntnisschriften der evangelish-lutherischen Kirche*. The translation employs contemporary English usage and incorporates the most recent scholarship on the various texts. The editors solicited input in the preparation of the new edition from more than a hundred scholars. The Scripture quotations are based on the New Revised Standard Version. This edition includes the same paragraph divisions as the Tappert edition.

The central document in *The Book of Concord* is the Augsburg Confession. The confession was written at the request of Emperor Charles V in order to offer a public explanation of the Lutheran position. Charles V was seeking to consolidate his divided empire in the face of the threat of Turkish imperial forces. Luther had been declared an outlaw in 1521. Therefore Philip Melanchthon, Luther's closest collaborator, prepared the text of the Augsburg Confession, taking consideration of previously existing documents. The 28 articles of the Augsburg Confession, 21 taking doctrinal positions and 7 explaining various reform efforts, was read before the emperor at the Diet of Augsburg on June 25, 1530, in a German version. Melanchthon also submitted a Latin version to the emperor at that time. The new edition of *The Book of Concord* includes translations of both the German and Latin versions on facing pages, not in parallel columns on the same page as in the Tappert edition, an improvement in readability.

The text of the Augsburg Confession is presented in its original, unaltered version. This is an important emphasis in light of the textual variations that later appeared. As an example of the new translation, consider Article 4 of the Augsburg Confession, "Concerning Justification," about which Luther wrote in The Smalcald Articles, "On this article stands all that we teach and practice . . ."

> Furthermore, it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St. Paul says in Romans 3[:21-26] and 4[:5]. (pp. 38, 40).

The editors refer to the Augsburg Confession as a "mission statement" for the Evangelical churches. That being the case, Article 4 is the core of the mission statement.

It would be a great gain for Lutheran congregations if this new edition of *The Book of Concord* were to inspire renewed study on the part of pastors and church members. Only occasionally does one hear an enlightening reference to the confessional writings in sermons by ordained pastors. Apart from the Small Catechism, few church members have even the most basic understanding of what the Lutheran Confessions are. One valuable feature of this edition is the inclusion of detailed annotations to the text, which serve as a learning aid for students. Informative introductions to the entire *Book of Concord* and to each of the individual writings provide background for interpreting the confessions in their respective historical contexts. Three indexes enhance the book for use in

study. The Index of Biblical References demonstrates how thoroughly the reformers grounded their positions on the Scriptures. The Biographical Index is an innovative and extremely important feature of the new edition, providing succinct identifications of the many historical persons referred to in *The Book of Concord.* This index is 17 pages long. The extensive Subject Index assists the reader in locating particular references by carefully subdividing the main topics. The CD-ROM version also allows the reader ease in undertaking topical searches. Two additional volumes, a collection of other relevant historical texts and an historical commentary, have been recently published by Fortress Press and will further promote renewed appreciation for the Lutheran confessional writings.

The publication of this volume is a monumental achievement. The editors and translators have rendered a service of inestimable value to the English-speaking Lutheran Church of the 21st century. It testifies to the ability of representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to cooperate on a venture that goes to the heart of our common faith. It would honor the ecumenical intent of the Augsburg Confession and the spirit of "concord" by which these Confessions are named were the publication of this volume to generate a study process—both by scholars and in the congregations of these two church bodies—that could lead to renewed affirmation of the common faith tradition that we share. The tragic sense of alienation and sometimes animosity between our church bodies remains a serious ecumenical challenge. By returning to our shared Lutheran origins we might enter a process that could lead to the dismantling of this regrettable impasse. May the appearance of this edition of *The Book of Concord* inspire us to new efforts to reclaim the faith we share!

Craig L. Nessan

The Dictionary of Historical Theology. Trevor A. Hart, general editor. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000. xx and 599 pages. Cloth. $50.00.

As stated by general editor Hart, the purpose of this volume is to make a "concise and reasonably comprehensive manual available to readers in the English language" (p. xix). Special attention is given in the 314 entries to particular figures, schools of thought, and formative texts in Christian tradition. A guiding question for the 173 authors has involved how this particular subject has introduced new perspectives and thereby contributed to the change and development of Christian thought. The various subjects are also located within certain trajectories of thought that help the reader identify intellectual antecedents and descendents.

While some of the lengthier articles deal with particular theological movements and perspectives (e.g., "Lutheran Confessions and Catechisms" by David Yeago, "Reformed Confessions and Catechisms" by Richard Mueller, "Thomism" by J. A. DiNoia), the vast majority deal with individual figures in the history of Christian thought (232 of the 314 entries focus on individuals). Of these, just a few are about women subjects (Margaret Mary Alacoque, Teresa of Avila, Evelyn Underhill). Moreover, only about 13 of the 173 authors are women. This indicates not so much how the major shapers of Christian thought have been men but how we continue to be selective about the voices we hear. This observation is accented when one notes how many of the articles deal with nineteenth- and especially twentieth-century figures, a large number of them from the generation who were influential in the U.S. and England on those who wrote the articles. A reader of the dictionary a hundred years from now will be surprised at how few of the modern names are representative of the global church and women as well as the number of names from the twentieth century that have become obscure.

The Dictionary of Historical Theology serves as a concise reference to several theological movements and historical topics. Many orthodox schools of thought and heretical movements in previous centuries receive basic and

adequate treatment. It serves even more as a handbook to modern and especially twentieth-century theologians of note. James Cone, Don Cupitt, Matthew Fox, James Gustafson, John Hick, Joseph Ratzinger, and Thomas Torrance are among those included, as well as the more standard subjects (e.g., Barth, Bonhoeffer, Tillich). Some attention is paid to recent Orthodox theologians, such as Vladimir Lossky, John Meyendorff, and Dumitru Staniloae. The articles conclude with suggestions for further reading, which can assist readers who seek to move more deeply into the subject. Also, the book concludes with a very helpful index to the subjects and especially names included in the articles.

The book is for consultation by general readers with an interest in the history of theology and those seeking to obtain an introduction to certain figures in Christian theology, especially those influential in recent times.

Craig L. Nessan

Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume 1. ***The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism.*** Edited by D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001. xiii and 619 pages. Paper. $44.99.

For some years the "new perspective" on Paul has challenged the correctness of a "Lutheran" interpretation of justification by faith. In no small measure this "new perspective" has been built on the 1977 book by E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, especially on his thesis that the pattern of religion of second temple Judaism is best characterized as "covenantal nomism" rather than legalism or works-righteousness. The volume under review puts the thesis of covenantal nomism to the test. A projected second volume will address the consequences for our reading of Paul himself.

The volume contains twelve studies by various scholars on the Jewish literature of the second temple period, divided mostly according to genre, plus articles on the Pharisees and on righteousness language with an introduction and conclusion by D. A. Carson. The results are mixed. In most cases the authors find that covenantal nomism provides a partial description but is not fully adequate or may even be misleading. Judaism was too complex to fit into one theological pattern. Almost all the studies agree that Jews believed their salvation was dependent on God's gracious election. But how they related this belief to obedience is far more difficult to characterize in any common way. Carson in his conclusion, however, seems to be more negative than most of the contributors when he asserts that much of the Jewish literature did embrace a theology of merit and works-righteousness. Just because there are flaws in the thesis of covenantal nomism does not mean that a thesis of Judaism as legalistic is substantiated.

This is a technical book that assumes a fairly extensive knowledge of second temple Judaism. For those who want to dig deeply into the current debates about justification in Paul, this volume provides the fullest available assessment of the Jewish theological context.

David W. Kuck
United Theological College
Kingston, Jamaica

"If this be from Heaven. . .": Jesus and the New Testament Authors in their Relationship to Judaism. By Peter J. Tomson. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001. 455 pages. Paper. $42.95.

This introduction to the New Testament presents a post-Holocaust reading of the texts highlighting its context within Judaism and pointing out manifestations of anti-Judaism. It includes a thorough discussion of first-century Judaism, an analysis of the historical Jesus and his approach to Judaism, and a survey of individual New Testament writers in their attitudes.

There is much to be commended about this study, especially the author's command of Jewish sources (though "Plato" on page 101 should be Philo). Judaism is not monolithic but includes a range of attitudes.

He concludes that Jesus was thoroughly Jewish and no anti-Jewish sayings can be de-

tected in him. It will likely be surprising that Tomson finds Paul as totally positive toward Judaism and that Luke among the Gospel writers is closest in retaining the attitude of Jesus.

Admirable is the careful attention to the various layers of certain books. Proto-Mark and the Markan Gospel present favorable attitudes toward Judaism, even in a non-Jewish context. However, later insertions, Tomson concludes, have introduced the anti-Jewish element in Mark 3:6 (Pharisees described as plotting against Jesus) and in Mark 7:19 ("while he made all foods clean").

Individual readers may question whether these sections go back to the historical Jesus, to the author Mark, or to a later redactor. Others may question how a statement declaring all foods clean is necessarily anti-Jewish. It is especially odd since one can find similar comments by Paul and Luke—whom the author treats as positive toward Judaism. The "slaughter and eat" command in Peter's Acts 10 vision, however, according to Tomson, did not mean that Peter proceeded to eat nonkosher food (p. 232). In a book of such magnitude, one does expect to find points of disagreement.

There are also several points of frustration. First, there are no footnotes. Ancient sources are cited within the text, but one must turn to the bibliography for modern studies. One is also confronted in the text with frequent parenthetical references to other sections within the same book. For example, the reader must scan the table of contents (there is also no topical index) to find Jesus' attitude toward divorce on pages 149–51. There in the midst of this discussion the reader is directed back to pages 99–102 for divorce in the context of Judaism and ahead to page 197 for Paul's view of divorce and to pages 286–87 for Matthew's editing of the earlier Gospel material.

This volume, while dealing with an important topic, will lend itself more to seminaries and graduate schools than to parish libraries.

Fred Strickert
Wartburg College
Waverly, Iowa

Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide. Edited by Troels Engberg-Pedersen. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001. x and 355 pages. Paper. $34.95.

This superb collection of essays is based on a 1997 conference in Copenhagen dealing with the implications of the ostensible dichotomy between Judaism and Hellenism as they pertain to the interpretation of Paul's letters. In his introduction to the volume, Engberg-Pedersen lays out the methodological assumptions shared by the authors and briefly summarizes their respective contributions to the debate. The first three essays by Wayne Meeks, Dale Martin, and Philip Alexander provide a probing analysis of the use of the terms "Judaism" and "Hellenism." Although they address different aspects of how the terms have been used historically, each demonstrates that these are ideological constructs that are not very useful in describing the complexities of living as a Jew in the Greco-Roman world. The other essays deal with particular themes or texts in the Pauline corpus, especially the Corinthian correspondence, in terms of the religious and social milieu in which Paul worked.

The contributions in this volume are bound together by a methodological premise that emphasizes convergence between the ideas reflected in Paul's letters and their social and religious context rather than distinctiveness. In an essay that takes its cue from Alexander's call for a paradigm that favors similarity and emphasizes the ways Judaism translated into Hellenism and vice versa, Stan Stowers argues that from an emic or indigenous perspective the Pauline communities looked more like philosophical schools than either synagogues or voluntary associations. He provides a judicious description of the role and practices of religion, philosophy, and associations in antiquity and suggests that the Pauline assemblies most resemble the philosophical schools, because even in the Diaspora the liturgy of the synagogue served to orient Judeans everywhere toward the temple. Loveday Alexander adopts Nock's persona of a "cultural tourist." She construes the question a little differently and examines it from the perspective of patterns of authority among the philosophical schools. She takes her cue from Sedley's claim

that the identity of philosophical movements was predicated on the authority of a founder figure. On this model Moses is a founder of a school, and, as with all philosophical movements, it was the authority of the foundational texts associated with the figurehead that formed and preserved the group's identity. According to her, Paul's citation of Scripture in a letter like 1 Corinthians indicates that "Moses" still functions as a prime source of authority for Paul and his readers, so in this respect both the synagogue and the Pauline assemblies share structural similarities with philosophical movements.

The other articles in the volume deal with the false dichotomy between Judaism and Hellenism in terms of particular interpretive issues in Paul's Corinthian correspondence. In his second contribution Meeks describes the household groups organized by Paul in Corinth as "artificial aliens" by virtue of their conversion to the God of Israel and baptism into Messiah Jesus, and maintains that the form of their community was modeled primarily on the Jewish immigrant associations of the Diaspora cities. John Barclay compares Josephus' discussion of the Jewish constitution, which emphasizes matching theory and practice, with the polity reflected in 1 Corinthians, and suggests that Paul tends toward less cultural specificity in practice because his communities are culturally diverse. In an excellent treatment of Paul's cosmology, Henrik Tronier shows the correspondence between philosophical idealism and apocalypticism in 1 Corinthians 15. Margaret Mitchell appeals to the early church fathers to interpret the language of "condescension" in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23. David Aune explicates the anthropological duality evident in the eschatology of 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10 by drawing on comparable notions of the relation between body and soul in Greco-Roman cosmology. In the final essay, John Fitzgerald argues that Paul's language of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians belongs to the friendship *topos*.

This is an exceptionally fine compendium of essays that redefines the extent to which Paul and the Judaism to which he belonged were shaped by and embedded in the cultural milieu of the Greco-Roman world.

Ray Pickett
Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest

Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel. By John S. Kloppenborg Verbin. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000. xii and 546 pages. Paper. $32.00.

The author says he intended to write an introduction to Q. That is a remarkable understatement. For those of us who are not Q experts, this work reads more like an encyclopedic reference than an introduction. All you ever wanted to know about Q can be found in this remarkable tome. One reason for the extensive nature of the work is that Kloppenborg Verbin is the doyen of Q scholars. Another is the remarkable quality of those who read the manuscript and gave suggestions (including, of course, members of the International Q Project). In that sense *Excavating Q* reads as a compendium of the best thinking available on the document Q.

Q was first extracted from Matthew and Luke as a source document. The underlying assumption of *Excavating Q* changes that radically. Q is not a document. It is a Gospel (pp. 4, 398–408). Nevertheless, there is no Sayings Gospel Q unless Q does indeed exist. Kloppenborg Verbin leaves no stone unturned. The first section of the book (pp. 11–270) reviews the history of Q research and examines minutely the case for Q over against other hypotheses, especially that of Griesbach (Matthew is first, so no Q is necessary). The author shows, as do most others, that Q must have originated in Galilee. References to northern towns and the sparsity of references to Judean institutions would be chief indicators. There must have been followers of Jesus who collected Q sayings, listened to this form of the Gospel, and eventually redacted it. Unlike some Q scholars, Kloppenborg Verbin is unwilling to posit a Q community or church, so he speaks of these followers as the Q people (pp. 170–71).

The second section of the study deals with ideology and theology (pp. 271–444). If Q is a Gospel, then it must be treated as the Fourth Synoptic and included in our perception of biblical theology. Even if scholars reject Q as a Gospel, then it, and now the Gospel of Thomas, must be included in any investigation of the historical Jesus (p. 362). Kloppenborg Verbin is willing to discuss the impact of Q and the Gospel

of Thomas on Jesus research but is unwilling to speak of the sayings as anything like *ipsissima verba.* Rather, he presupposes that Q is a Gospel and therefore went through the same redactional process as other Gospel materials (pp. 112–23). The identity of and the redactions that led to Q^2 and Q^3 have been much disputed. In short, Kloppenborg Verbin considers that judgment materials, including the Lot cycle, and the Deuteronomistic theology of history have been added to Q^1 (pp. 118-22).

The theological debates regarding Q, if a Gospel, have also been much debated. Kloppenberg Verbin believes Q stresses the coming of the reign of God more than Christology, but the coming of the Reign is connected to the person of Jesus (p. 396). Is Q primarily sapiental, prophetic, eschatological, or even apocalyptic? Kloppenberg Verbin sidesteps the issue by making form primary. Instructional literature, as Kloppenberg Verbin names it, can carry several motifs. In that sense it is possible to speak of the Cynic influence on Q. Jesus was not at all a Cynic, but the form of Cynic wisdom has parallels to Q materials. Finally, Q was redacted and assimilated because its social theology, the nature of the coming Reign, was too radical for developing Christianity.

It is difficult to critique a compendium. To be sure, Kloppenborg Verbin can be combative (p. 385), but he seldom takes an absolute position. There are at least two absolutes: Q did exist, and it is a Gospel. This reviewer agrees.

Graydon F. Snyder

Kingdom, Grace, Judgment: Paradox, Outrage, and Vindication in the Parables of Jesus. By Robert Farrar Capon. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002. ix and 522 pages. Paper. $26.00.

This is an entertaining book. The language is highly contemporary, even "hip." Capon's interpretation of the parables of Jesus is unique, if not downright outrageous. The reader will be forced to reconsider almost every part of the teaching of Jesus and will find everywhere new possibilities for preaching or teaching the parables. This is not a textbook. We might call it an expository exegesis of the parables. Nevertheless, Capon, an Episcopalian priest and noted author, builds a scholarly basis for his interpretations. He utilizes the meaning of the original and often offers his own translation from the Greek. He is constantly aware of context and Synoptic parallels.

Actually this book is a combination of three books on the parables, printed seriatim by Zondervan and Eerdmans: *The Parables of the Kingdom, The Parables of Grace, and The Parables of Judgment.* Without pressing his method too forcefully, Capon analyzes a parable in terms of its catholicity (universal application), mystery (hidden meaning), actuality (a course of action), and hostility or response (reaction to the parable). Some explanations delight. I found his interpretation of the Weeds among the Wheat marvelous. Anyone speaking on 9/11 and its aftermath should consider what God would have done with terrorists (pp. 83–93). Other interpretations seem puzzling. For example, Capon sees death and resurrection everywhere. He does realize that some of us readers will never grasp the pervasive nature of this theological conviction (p. 223). How he finds death and resurrection in the political parable of the Coin in the Fish's Mouth completely escapes me (pp. 167–78). On the other hand, his approach to the Parables of Judgment is very helpful. For the most part he does not see a condemnation of evil people, but judgment on people who were in the Jesus community but failed to incorporate for themselves the gift of God's grace. He calls it "inclusion before exclusion" (p. 347). A good example would be the Wise and Foolish Maidens (pp. 490–501).

For those who pick up Capon's book I cannot promise satisfaction. I can promise considerable stimulation.

Graydon F. Snyder

In Search of the Early Christians: Selected Essays. By Wayne A. Meeks. Edited by Allen R. Hilton and H. Gregory Snyder. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. xxviii and 314 pages. Cloth. $35.00.

Wayne Meeks, Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Yale University, has been one of the most significant American New Testament scholars of the last forty years. In *The First Urban Christians* (Yale, 1983) he called New Testament scholarship to the importance of reading Paul within the context of Early Roman Empire society. Later he provided significant resources for interpreting the ethical teachings of the New Testament in *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Westminster Press, 1986) and *The Origins of Christian Morality: the First Two Centuries* (Yale, 1993). He also published significant essays over the years.

This volume collects twelve essays, written over a generation. The first eight are original interpretations of significant themes in New Testament thought (women in early Christianity, John, Paul's letters), while the last four range widely over hermeneutical issues, variety in Paul's ethics, the relation of Jews and Gentiles, and a mosaic in Thessalonica. All of these essays are clear, well documented, and illuminating. I myself found the essay "On Trusting an Unpredictable God: A Hermeneutical Meditation of Romans 1–11" one of the most illuminating in the book.

Meeks provides an introduction, "Reflections on an Era," which describes the path he took in biblical interpretation and at the same time gives a coherence to what might otherwise appear as disjointed essays. His "Afterward" describes briefly the challenges faced by New Testament interpretation today, in the face of fragmenting methods of interpretation. This volume is thus both a record of a generation of study and a challenge to the next generation of scholars. It deserves—and will get—wide reading.

Edgar Krentz

Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity. Essays in Honour of Peter Richardson. Edited by Stephen G. Wilson and Michel Desjardins. Studies in Christianity and Judaism / Études sur le Christianisme et le Judaïsme No. 9. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion / Corporation Canadienne des Sciences Religieuses, 2000. 632 pages. Cloth. $69.95.

Festschriften are notoriously difficult to review. This volume, which honors Peter Richardson on his 65th birthday, is no exception. Richardson devoted his scholarly life to the interpretation of Paul, the complex relationships of Jews and Christians from ca. 30–130, and to Herod the Great. The thirty contributors to this book, all recognized scholars, respect that fact in the topics they chose to discuss. Space prohibits listing them all by name here.

This Festschrift set a challenging goal before its contributors: to see how artifacts aid in interpreting texts, and texts artifacts. The results are mixed. The contributions fall into five areas. The two articles in Part 1 survey Richardson's work and provide a bibliography of his publications. The ten in Part 2 were to discuss the relationship of artifacts (archaeologically recovered data) to New Testament texts. In fact the first nine make almost no use of realia but concentrate on extrabiblical textual material, while the tenth, by James G. Dunn, concludes that archaeological evidence contributes little to an understanding of Romans, Sardis and Melito, Colossians, or Sepphoris; much more promising is the evidence for Jewish ossuaries, mikwaot (ritual baths), and synagogues in Palestine.

It is different in the last three sections. Four of the six essays in Part 3 use artifactual evidence in interpreting resurrection (Beth Shearim), early Christian codices, and architecture, in the "World of Christian Origins," i.e., the first Christian century. The nine essays in Part 4 are devoted to Late-Antique Judaism. Some make excellent use of archaeological data: epigraphic evidence for Jewish defectors, the Tobiad palace at 'Iraq al Amir, ossuaries as evidence for Jewish proselytes, Masada, the social context of the Mish-

nah, and so on. The three in Part 5 relate to the Greco-Roman world: one on theurgy, two on Apuleius in relation to realia, and an Ostian Mithraeum.

These studies illustrate the fact that archaeological finds can aid in the interpretation of texts. They are less conclusive about texts illuminating archaeological data. In both cases it is clear that both are open to various interpretations, which may clarify why some articles in this valuable collection make almost no use of archaeological data.

Edgar Krentz

The Trinity. By Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002. vii and 156 pages. Paper. $15.00.

This short book, a guide to the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity and its contemporary reinterpretations, will be welcomed by teachers of introductory theology classes. Olson and Hall are markedly judicious in their overall treatment. The book's outline is simple and straightforward. It starts with "Patristic Contributions" and then deals with "Medieval, Reformation, and Modern Contributions." The book concludes with a 30-page annotated bibliography, extensive and highly valuable not just for the student but also the seasoned scholar.

The section on the patristics (Apologists, Clement, Origen, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cappadocians, Hilary, Augustine) skillfully and succinctly handles material which for most beginning students is highly complex and turgid. This will be welcomed by many instructors. The sections on Richard of St. Victor, Joachim of Fiore, and Aquinas crosses the information gap about medieval views of the Trinity that result from many scholars ignoring important medieval contributions. The authors' attempt to discern Luther's view of the Trinity largely from Ewald Plass's *What Luther Says* is disappointing for this reviewer. However, their reporting on Enlightenment thinkers, such as Zinzendorf and Edwards, corrects a gap in the history of trinitarian doctrine since these thinkers are often ignored. The theologies of the later Barth and Rahner, who contend that the economic Trinity is one with the immanent and vice versa, are masterfully treated, as well as the contemporary thinkers influenced by them: Moltmann, LaCugna, Boff, and Ziziouslas. The impact that Moltmann has given to trinitarian theology is thoroughly covered. In this regard, the absence of Pannenberg's trinitarianism, in which the Trinity is so crucial in the development of his overall systematic theology and doctrine of God, is surprising.

However, irrespective of a few caveats, this book is a sane and readable account of the importance of trinitarian theology to be welcomed by students, clergy, and lay readers.

Mark C. Mattes
Grand View College
Des Moines, Iowa

Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospels. By Scot McKnight. Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox, 2002. x and 214 pages. Paper. $18.95.

McKnight is concerned that "the evangelical, the Roman Catholic, and the mainline Protestant churches force each person to 'tell the same story'" about conversion (p. ix). He writes this book to help the churches recover the individuality and variety of conversion witnessed to by the New Testament. He develops a grid of conversion descriptions: a process of socialization, a liturgical process, and personal decision. He then draws on six dimensions of conversion from modern sociological descriptions: context, crisis, quest, encounter, commitment, consequences for life (pp. 49–50). Conversion involves an individual and a group.

McKnight then examines each of these six in turn, first using stories of modern conversions as a base for his analysis. Then he turns to the conversion stories in the Gospels, using the same six dimensions in the analysis. Conversion in the Gospels may be apostasy from something else, intensification of faith, affiliation, institutional transition, and/or tradition transition.

He concludes that conversion is a process, with infinite variation. Peter, not Paul, best rep-

resents that process. McKnight stresses that examining the Gospel narratives confirms the sociological description in modern works. While he does not draw out implications for evangelistic practice, a careful reading of this book will open many areas for thought and discussion about modes of evangelism, precisely because he does not end up with an evangelistic formula. McKnight's discussion, moving from biblical studies to the contemporary world, stimulates reflection—which makes his book valuable as a resource today.

Edgar Krentz

The Raft Is Not the Shore: Conversations Toward A Buddhist-Christian Awareness. By Thich Nhat Hanh and Daniel Berrigan. Foreword by bell hooks. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001. xii and 153 pages. Paper. $15.00.

In 1974 Daniel Berrigan retreated to Paris in order to take time for personal healing and reflection. He had been intensely involved in resistance to the war in Vietnam, serving 18 months in prison for acts of protest. Thich Nhat Hanh was a native of Vietnam, a Buddhist monk and poet, active in the service of nonviolence. In 1974 he was living in Paris because his passage home had been denied due to his activism for peace. This book is the fruit of the encounter of these two contemplative social activists at that time and place.

At first glance, the world in which these conversations first took place no longer exists. An entire generation of children has grown up with no recollection of the Vietnam conflagration. Even the framework of East-West conflict and the communist threat are fading from memory. Anti-war activism seems more a matter of nostalgia than substance. And the encounter between Buddhism and Christianity has progressed far beyond these initial recognitions.

Nevertheless, the core convictions of the authors continue to challenge the reader of this book to get on the raft and negotiate the current. Though the causes today seem far more ambiguous, the call to risky discipleship remains to be heeded. Still children die each day from lack of bread and basic medicine. Still women and children suffer at the hands of violent men. Nations continue to betray their sacred trust, favoring the powerful at the expense of the weak. In a globalized economy, responsibility has become so diffuse that we scarcely know where to turn. In many respects the way before us seems murkier and far less certain.

What remains impressive is to see through this book how Daniel Berrigan and Thich Nhat Hanh have stayed the course. Christian and Buddhist together, they inspire faithful and courageous activism rooted in a deep spiritual foundation. To join them on the raft means a dangerous ride. The woodcuts throughout the book by Mai Vo-Dinh are exquisite.

Craig Nessan

Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation. Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl. Edited by Richard A. Horsley. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000. viii and 248 pages. Paper. $26.00.

The essays in this volume originated as papers read to the Paul and Politics Group at four annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, together with respondents' comments. They are presented now as a Festschrift in honor of Bishop Krister Stendahl, Professor Emeritus of New Testament at Harvard Divinity School, for stimulating a new way of reading Paul. (Stendahl rejected an individualist view of Paul as having a bad conscience and blamed Luther for this; I think it more likely that Luther reflected medieval Western Christendom's preoccupation with guilt, confession, and absolution.)

The contributors to this volume deal in original and provocative fashion with several interrelated political issues in Paul's letters. Topics include the politics of interpretation, of the Roman Empire; of Israel (Jew and Gentile relations); in churches (social relations: sexes, slaves and free). Many articles pay special attention to the Corinthian letters.

Contributors include Stendahl, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Harvard Divinity School), Richard A. Horsley (University of Massachusetts, Boston), N. T. Wright (at that time West-

minster Cathedral), Sheila Briggs (University of Southern California), Cynthia Briggs Kittredge (Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest), Pamela Eisenbaum (Iliff School of Theology), Mark Nanos (Lees Summit, Missouri), Allen Callahan (Harvard Divinity School), Szekar Wan (Andover Newton Theological School), and Neil Elliott (Seabury Western). Respondents include Antoinette C. Wire, Robert Jewett, Alan Segal, and Calvin Roetzel—all well-known scholars of Paul.

This a very rich volume; this brief review cannot do more than say that it honors Stendahl by demonstrating how a younger generation of scholars is thinking out the implications of his work in significant areas—a fitting Festschrift indeed. It leads the reader into thinking new thoughts too. Pastors will benefit from reading these essays; they do not leave one in the ivory tower of the academy.

Edgar Krentz

Briefly Noted

Jews in America: A Cartoon History. Written and Illustrated by David Gantz (Jewish Publication Society, $24.95). After a brief note on the crusades, this history begins with the voyage of Columbus to America and chronicles the history of Jews in the United States up until today. In addition to full attention to discrimination and the horrors of the Holocaust (including U.S. inaction), G. also records Jewish religious leaders, as well as leaders in business, entertainment, literature, the arts, politics, and the military. There's plenty on Israel, Camp David, and Soviet Jewry as well. G's own picture appears frequently and offers interpretive comments. A very easy read. *RWK*

Get Lost in Jerusalem: Explore the Holy City through Virtual Reality. By Ted Hildebrandt. (Zondervan, $29.99). With travel to Jerusalem becoming increasingly dangerous, many will welcome this CD-Rom that provides a virtual tour to more than three hundred sites covering both testaments. Those brave enough to travel in person will also profit from using this electronic device in advance. A "guided tour" provides an introduction to Jerusalem's geography, roads within the old city, eight gates, its four quarters and many 360-degree panoramas (including the ability to zoom in and zoom out). "Conquer Environment" gives data on the geography, history, and theology of Jerusalem. There are even games to test your skills after you have learned your way around (matching the names and pictures of the eight gates, identifying forty-three other sites, or carrying out eight rather difficult "missions" that start from a prominent shop and challenge you to find various sites in Jerusalem). This CD might fire the imagination of confirmation students. The author previously produced Greek and Hebrew electronic tutors. *RWK*

The Chronicler as Author. Studies in Text and Texture. Edited by M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie (Sheffield, $90). The sixteen essays in this volume deal with Chronicles as literature and are a sequel to *The Chronicler as Historian*, published in 1997. Two issues may be highlighted in this brief review.' The first is covered by two essays that explore the way the Chronicler has used his biblical and extrabiblical sources, showing faithful adherence to them and freedom to modify and elaborate them. Ironically, we know less about the Chronicler's extrabiblical sources than ever before. An essay by M. evaluates various models of redaction and decisively refutes, in my opinion, the proposal of Graeme Auld that Chronicles was not dependent on Samuel-Kings but that both works used a common source. The second issue that is treated in two essays is the way in which the Chronicler has incorporated canonical psalms in 1 Chronicles 16. By incorporating and redacting these psalms the Chronicler has given them a new setting and a distinctively different meaning. The editors are to be congratulated for this sterling collection. *RWK*

The Jerusalem Archaeological Park. By Ronny Reich, Gideon Avni, and Tamar Witner. (Israel Antiquities Authority, $24). The Jerusalem archaeological park extends to the area south and east of the temple mount, including the Mount of Olives, the city occupied by David, and the Hinnom valley. This guidebook is written with two levels of detail: bold type gives a concise description of the site, and regular type provides a more detailed account. Full-color pictures and clear diagrams and maps make this an authoritative guide to this great outdoor museum. This excellent book concludes with a chronological chart of Jerusalem's history and a helpful glossary. A Web site also provides access to this archaeological park: http://www.archpark.org.il. *RWK*

Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land. Edited by Avraham Negev and Shimon Gibson (Continuum, $39.95). A first edition of this encyclopedia was published in 1972 under the direction of N., but the present, greatly expanded edition enlists more than one hundred international scholars who produced more than eight hundred entries, ranging from Abarim (the peak of Mt. Nebo) to Zuzim and Emmim, two peoples mentioned in Genesis 14. All the major excavated sites are discussed, and there are articles on general subjects such as mosaics, seals, flint tools, pottery, and archaeological methods. The articles are up-to-date, including the Chalcolithic objects found in 1995 at the village of Peqi'in (whose location is not given), the "House of David" inscription from Dan, and the Miqne inscription (biblical Ekron), dating to 604 B.C.E., which mentions Ikausu son of Padi, both of whom are referred to as kings of Ekron in Assyrian records. There are almost three hundred illustrations and a fine glossary that explains technical archaeological terms. The editor provides an e-mail address to which one can send corrections. Among those is the mention of "Iron" fortifications of Jerusalem, where the writer surely intended "Iron Age" fortifications. *RWK*

Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan. By John Day (Sheffield Academic, $73). This book thoroughly examines the biblical and inscriptional evidence dealing with Yahweh and El, Asherah, Baal, Astarte, Anat, and the astral and underworld deities. He concludes, against Frank Cross, that El and Yahweh were originally separate deities but that Yahweh was eventually credited with many characteristics of El. The golden calves of 1 Kings 12 are held to be images of the deity rather than pedestals on which the deity was enthroned. The Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Qirbet el-Qom inscriptions refer to Asherah's cult symbol rather than the goddess herself, but in some syncretistic circles Asherah was indeed Yahweh's consort. Molech, to whom children were sacrificed in the Old Testament, was the name of a deity and not the name of a kind of sacrifice (contrary to Eissfeldt). The worship of other deities was quite frequent in preexilic times, but there was a monolatrous party already in those times and absolute monotheism was first given explicit expression by Second Isaiah. Josiah's reformation played a significant role in the decline of the Canaanite deities in Israel. D. judiciously weighs competing notions about Canaanite deities contained in the nearly thirty pages of bibliography with which the book ends. *RWK*

The Essential IVP Reference Collection. (InterVarsity, $169.99). This CD-Rom contains thirteen large volumes published previously by InterVarsity, plus several English versions of the Bible. The monographs include a one-volume commentary, seven Bible dictionaries (primarily focused on the NT), a Bible Background Commentary on each testament (relating the text to the ancient world), an atlas, a treatment of the "hard sayings" of the Bible, and a dictionary of Biblical Imagery. IVP tends to be on the conservative side, especially evident in the fundamentalist solutions to the "hard sayings," but the various dictionaries contain essays by well-known Lutheran exegetes like Frederick Danker and Robert Smith, and many of the evangelicals are of world-class stature—James Dunn (on Romans), Ralph Martin, I. Howard Marshall, and F. F. Bruce. The price is right, though it remains to be seen how pastors and others will take to a library in electronic form. *RWK*

Luther's Works on CD-Rom. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Fortress Press; Concordia Publishing House, $179). In addition to the complete 55-volume set of the American Edition of *Luther's Works*, this CD also contains the Tappert edition of the *Book of Concord.* Not only does this electronic medium save several feet of shelf space and make it possible to use Luther's works both at home and in the office, but this CD also enables a person to search for a given topic either directly or through the 55th volume, an index prepared by Joel Lundeen. Some of the searches seemed a bit slow to me and I was disappointed that clicking on Bible verses gave me only the King James Version, but this medium will surely encourage wide reading of Luther and quizzing him—via the search mechanism—about his opinion on everything under the sun. One can highlight memorable passages in yellow (or another color) or copy whole paragraphs to a word processor. *RWK*

Leviticus 23–27. The Anchor Bible 3B. By Jacob Milgrom (Doubleday, $50). This is the third and final volume in the massive commentary on Leviticus by M. now totalling more than 2,700 pages! As with many other scholars, M. identifies chaps 17–27 as "H," but in distinction to many he puts H later than P—but both before the exile, concludes that H polemicizes against P, and H extends into Exodus and Numbers. M. is the acknowledged master of knowledge about Israel's cultic life and controls not only all modern critical literature but medieval Jewish commentaries as well. M's translation of the entire book of Leviticus is included in this volume. The bibliography runs to eighty-six pages and the indexes to one hundred sixty pages! M. endorses the applicability of the biblical jubilee to the cancellation of international debt: "Thus the jubilee laws . . . offer a realistic blueprint for bridging the economic gap between the have and have-not nations, which otherwise portends political uprisings that can engulf the entire world." An excursus by Lisbeth S. Fried and David Noel Freedman argues that the jubilee year was in fact celebrated in Judah as early as the time of Hezekiah. M's lifetime of brilliant research here reaches an astounding climax. *RWK*

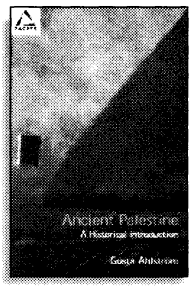
Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. By Joseph Blenkinsopp (Doubleday, $50). This recent volume in the Anchor Bible commentary series brings excellent historical critical and philological tools to the task of exegesis and will be followed by a second volume by B. on Isaiah 40–66. While B. admits that there are late redactional links between the first and last chapters of the book of Isaiah, he opposes the idea that Second Isaiah was written by a school of devotees to the Isaianic tradition and concludes that Second Isaiah's concern for the reconstruction of Jerusalem made a good fit with the single-minded concentration on the doomed fate of the city in chaps. 1–39. He stands opposed to advocates of a closer relationship between the two books (such as Hugh Williamson, Brevard Childs, and Christopher Seitz). B. is a good, reliable, and relatively succinct guide to the intricacies of this prophet, though, given the complexities of the book's origin and exegetical problems, no one would be expected to agree with his every move. (I tend to doubt, for example, that "Immanuel" is a good omen in 7:14 or that B. has correctly understood the messianic titles in 9:6.) Still, if I were asked to name the best current commentary on Isaiah 1–39, this would be it. *RWK*

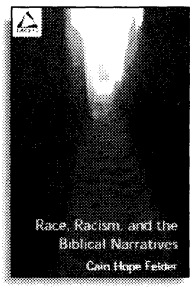
The Face of Old Testament Studies. A Survey of Contemporary Approaches. Edited by David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (Baker, $34.99). The sixteen articles in this book trace the ups and downs of Old Testament scholarship during the last three decades of the twentieth century. The articles are broadly based and include also, but by no means exclusively, the insights of conservative scholarship. There are articles on inscriptions relating to the OT, archaeology, history of various periods, and study of particular books (Pentateuch, history books, prophets, wisdom, Psalms, apocalyptic), and various methodologies (textual criticism, literary approaches, historiography). First rate stuff. *RWK*

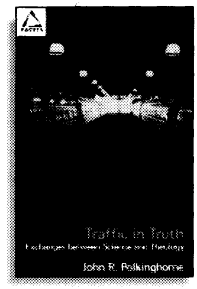
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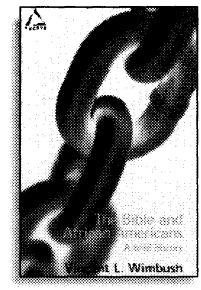
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Preaching Helps

Ash Wednesday—Good Friday, Series B

Four Gospels, Three Years

I don't know whether John is complaining. His fellow evangelists get to have whole years named after them, but we use John as supplementary material, inserting it here and there, especially in Lent and Easter. Of course, chopping up John the way we do, it is not easy to get a sense of the Fourth Gospel as a whole.

It's difficult even when we step back and scan the Gospel in its entirety, asking, "What is the story in John's Gospel?" Here are two attempts to summarize the plot of the Gospel of John in a single sentence. It is of course risky to attempt summing up a complex document of some 15,400 words in a single sentence, but the exercise may be illuminating.

In a book entitled *Three Gospels* (Scribner, 1996) Reynolds Price traces John's account of Jesus' life over several pages and then sums up by compressing the entire story into this sentence: "The force that conceived and bore all things came here among us, proved his identity in visible human acts, was killed by men no worse than we, rose from death, and walked again with his early believers, vowing eternal life beside him to those who also come to believe that he is God and loves us as much as his story shows" (p. 166).

Price is a voice to reckon with. He has written twenty-six volumes of poems, plays, essays, memoirs, and novels. For forty years he has been professor of English at Duke University, and during his long tenure he has pursued his interest in the Bible and in the Gospels in particular. Because of that interest he has in recent years offered seminars on the Gospels of Mark and John, and now he has written *Three Gospels.*

By the time he was "broiling in adolescence," he writes, he could see that "the four gospels' successful accounts of a single life, a life that was tortured and then transfigured by the dark hand of the source of creation, had not only shaped the actual Earth and the lives of its creatures through two thousand years." He could see also that "those brief accounts had also produced—as sparks from their core—the work of my early models and masters: Dante, Michelangelo, Milton,

Bach, Handel, the late poems of Eliot, those stories of Ernest Hemingway that also ache for sublime transcendence, and a good many more of the props of life for millions at least as curious and needful as I" (p. 14).

Price speaks of his *Three Gospels* as payment of a "partial installment on my old debt to a pair of tales [the Gospels of Mark and John] that have counted as much in my life" (p. 15).

Here's the effort of New Testament scholar Charles Talbert to get the whole of John's plot or story into one long sentence: "John tells of one who came as revealing, empowering presence; who picked/produced a new community and provided them and others during his public ministry with warrants for a different kind of worship; who privately predicted what their future would be like, offering promise, parenesis, and prayer for that time; and who ultimately made provision for their future community life, worship, and ministry before he returned to whence he had come" (*Reading John* [Crossroad, 1992], p. 64).

Two who have written more extensively on the plot of John's Gospel are R. Alan Culpepper and Fernando Segovia. Here is my paraphrase of several paragraphs of Culpepper's treatment: Jesus, the incarnation of the divine *logos*, enters the world with a multifaceted task: to reveal the Father by bearing witness to the truth, to take away the sin of the world, and to authorize the children of God. In doing this he faces opposition of cosmic proportions. The more Jesus announces his redemptive mission the more clearly his identity is revealed and the more intense the hostility toward him becomes. Hostility mounts until, at the cross, Jesus' enemies appear to achieve their purpose. Unbelief appears to triumph over belief. And yet the cross is Jesus' glorification, the moment that finally reveals his glory for all to see. And at the end a community of faith has been established (Culpepper, *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* [Fortress, 1983], 87–89).

For Culpepper, plot development in John is not a matter of how Jesus changes but of how his identity, revealed to readers already at the beginning of the narrative, comes to be recognized and how it fails to be recognized. He notes the way "each episode [in the Gospel] has essentially the same plot as the story as a whole. Will Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman or the lame man recognize Jesus and thereby receive eternal life?" (pp. 88–89) The aim of the Gospel's plot, says Culpepper, is to woo readers to accept its interpretation of Jesus and thereby to join the company of believers glimpsed in the "we" of 1:14 (p. 98).

Segovia sees a twofold use of the ancient biographical "journey motif" in the Gospel of John. First is the cosmic journey of the Word of God moving from

the world of God to the world of human beings, becoming flesh in Jesus of Nazareth and carrying out the mission of the Father in and to the world (1:1–18). Upon completion of the mission, the Word returns to the world of God (18:1–21:25). In the second place, the public life of the Word made flesh (1:19–17:26) is narrated as a series of four journeys to Jerusalem.

After a long section on the journeys and the structure of the Gospel, Segovia turns in a very helpful manner to what he sees as "a rather complex variety of strategic functions for the Gospel as a whole" (p. 47).

1. Strong didactic function. Jesus engages in "widespread and sustained teaching regarding the ways and values of God, his own status or identity as Word of God, and his role or mission in the world. . . . As a result . . . the implied readers of the Gospel are indeed drawn thereby into the community of believers . . . the children of God are those who believe in Jesus and carry out his commands."

2. Very strong polemical function. "Jesus as the Word of God undertakes a broad and sustained attack on the ways and values of the world at large. . . . The community of believers, the children of God, should see itself as deeply estranged from and at odds with the world, the children of the devil—in fact, they have been 'taken out of' the world and are no longer 'of the world.'"

3. Admonitory function. "The readers of the Gospel are specifically warned that an acceptance of the ways and values of God in the world implies and entails severe opposition from the world," including hatred and oppression.

4. Clear consolatory function. "An acceptance of the ways and values of God in the world implies and entails a very privileged position while in the world, ultimate victory over the world, and an abiding union with God in the world above: the community of believers shall receive glory not only in the world of human beings but also in the world of God."

5. Exhortatory function. "The mission of the Father must be undertaken as appointed regardless of the consequences. . . . Only through trials and defeat in the world can the teaching of God be properly disseminated and the mission properly accomplished." (Fernando Segovia, "The Journey(s) of the Word of God: A Reading of the Plot of the Fourth Gospel," *Semeia* 53 [1991], 23–54)

I am intrigued by these efforts of Price, Talbert, Culpepper, and Segovia to grasp the plot of John in briefest possible compass. It seems to me that Talbert and especially Segovia are helpful in thinking about John's varied purposes in writing. Both of them put flesh on the assertion that "these things are written that you may believe" (John 20:30–31). That summary verse is often understood too narrowly so that John is thought to be satisfied when readers can say, "I

believe." As preachers and teachers we really need to go farther even than Talbert and Segovia in the effort to discover what John meant by saying that he wrote to generate faith in Jesus so that believers might have "life in his name." John gives plenty of clues about the many dimensions of such "life." But they are neglected in traditional readings of John that offer primarily christological grist for the theologian's mill. Segovia's list of "functions" begins to point us in the right direction.

Assisting us with the task of penetrating to the heart of the Johannine and other texts for the Lenten season in preparation for preaching is my friend **Herb Spomer**. He and I sat next to one another for four years back in our seminary days. Classes were large, and we were directed to sit in alphabetical order. And I mean "directed." It was not a mere suggestion! Those were the days when we began Greek studies before entering the seminary. In seminary we all continued Greek and started Hebrew. Herb was particularly fascinated by Hebrew and went on after seminary to further language study. He then taught Hebrew and Old Testament for nearly twenty years at Concordia Senior College and Gettysburg Seminary, and after that first career he entered parish ministry.

Herb is now retired from St. Thomas Lutheran Church in St. Thomas, Pennsylvania, where he served for eighteen years. Or has he retired? He presently serves as part time chaplain at Luther Ridge Retirement Community in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and he is a member of the Lower Susquehanna Synod's Leadership Support Committee. He is active in the Chambersburg chapter of the American Guild of Organists and performs occasionally. When he is not at the keyboard, he is probably stamp collecting, vegetable gardening, or enjoying his grandchildren.

Heartiest thanks to Herb and to all preachers who wrestle with the texts week after week, striving to wring from them an animating and energizing word for God's people in our time and place.

Yours,

Robert H. Smith, Editor of Preaching Helps
Professor of New Testament
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
2770 Marin Avenue, Berkeley CA 94708
rsmith@plts.edu

Ash Wednesday
February 26, 2003

Joel 2:1–2, 12–17 (or Isaiah 58:1–12)
Psalm 51:1–18 (NRSV 1–17)
2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10
Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

First Reading

The adjectives pile up, as Joel describes the coming horror. The Day of the Lord is a superlative disaster. Nothing like it has ever happened before; nothing like it will happen again!

The only hint that it is Yahweh who sends the locusts, aside from the fact that this is a day *of the Lord*, is in verse 11, "The LORD utters his voice at the head of his army. . . ." And the only indication that the plague is brought on by the people's sin is implied in the word "return" (used twice, vv. 12 and 13). Also the clause "relents from punishing" suggests there might be something to punish. Job sat in the ashes, too, but had nothing to repent of!

There is no prophetic diatribe; the plague is a natural disaster. Yet, responding to the call of its leaders, the community came together to fast. Yahweh quickly responded to the plea for relief, became jealous for his land, and took pity on his people. Following the fast, things soon got back to normal. Is there repentance here? If sin and repentance aren't that explicit here, why use this text for Ash Wednesday?

The involvement in Joel is communal; in Psalm 51, initially, it is personal. The individual knows his sinfulness, even though the psalm doesn't say how he became aware of God's displeasure. But after the psalmist experienced cleansing, he drew the community into this reality as well: "I will teach transgressors, sing aloud of your deliverance, offer sacrifice" (2:13ff.). Those acts signal the completion of the process of repentance and the entry into the forgiven life.

"See, *now* is the acceptable time; see, *now* is the day of salvation!" (2 Cor 6:2) The day of the Lord can be, and in fact is, a day of salvation. "Be reconciled to God!" The Greek verb is the intentional human response to good news of divine listening and helping, "God was in Christ. . . ." That day is now! The "now" is not compelled by some crisis, plague of nature, or other "act of God." The time is now because everything is new. It is the right moment, *kairos*, for the world! For Paul, bearer of this news, plagues and personal hardships only intensified his urgency to get out the word, making use of all the proper "weapons" to accomplish this.

Being seen and praised by others for their alms, empty prayers and fasting is the empty gratification the Pharisees are rewarded with now (Matthew 6). Their actions have the intent of gaining a reward and are not directed to God. But "whenever you [singular] give alms, pray, or fast, be inconspicuous." This guarantees the personal attention of the One who already knows. To be assured that your Father "sees" you is your reward. Sharing, praying, and abstinence are their own reward, which offer nothing tangible for now, but which have ultimate value, "treasures in heaven."

Pastoral Reflections

Ash Wednesday does not summon the community to fasting or repentance as the response to random "acts of God," acts of war, or other tragedies. What does our nation, following September 11, have to repent of? These days ad hoc prayer vigils respond to such things. Ash Wednesday is fixed into the ecclesiastical calendar. Even so it receives scant attention. The droughts and floods of last summer, the business scandals and the drying up of retirement accounts, the continuing alerts to possible acts of

terror, abductions of children, do not bring people to their knees in repentance. The normal responses are chagrin, outrage, vigilance, and yes, prayer for God to act.

Yet "no other sign" may be given. For the church to establish a routine for communal repentance and to encourage individual confession and absolution, for the church to accept available signs as God's reminders to fast, pray, and give alms is appropriate. It is the responsibility of the ministry of reconciliation to lead the community in such observance and to proclaim the day of salvation.

First Sunday in Lent
March 2, 2003

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

First Reading

At times it is good that God remembers. The flood proved to be disastrous—even to God, whose early attempt to cleanse the world of wickedness resulted in the return of chaos and the destruction of the primeval population, but unfortunately not the destruction of sin. Now God wants to forget about it. The part that God is to remember is the promise that he won't ever again cut off all flesh by the waters of a flood. What God is now going to do about sin is something new. This is not the only covenant God will make with his people.

Then there are times when it is good that God does not remember. "Old sins, forget them please, God! But your mercy and steadfast love, which is older, remember!" Remembering is not only the mental act of recalling the past. It is acting in the present. The psalm lists ways in which God is to "remember," to act in behalf of the suppliant. These actions consist of a balance between dealing with dangerous liabilities on the outside and engendering inner assets. All of this is based firmly on "your goodness' sake, O Lord."

1 Peter brings news of what God has done about sin. Christ suffered, the righteous one for the unrighteous ones (he is your substitute), to bring you to God (he is your mediator). The career of Christ took him on a complicated itinerary, but the road is always upward. It included suffering for sin, once for all, so no more floodlike destruction is needed. Peter's memory of the flood put a new spin on the event, emphasizing its saving character and pointing ahead to baptism. Christ's road brought him to the right hand of God where he firmly contains any forces that oppose him or harass the saints.

The Spirit-driven itinerary of Jesus begins at his baptism (Mark 1). From Nazareth he goes to the Jordan, to the wilderness, and back to Galilee, with a rough and ready urgency. The tearing apart of the heavens, the declaration to Jesus of his unique Sonship by the heavenly Voice, the descent of the heavenly Dove, the sojourn in the wilderness, temptation by Satan, the company of wild beasts, the ministry of angels—all this prepares Jesus for the rigors of proclaiming the good news.

Pastoral Reflections

The world is a dangerous place. God didn't make it that way, Scripture insists. It became that way shortly after creation and continued on a downward spiral. Evil could not be contained and the world could not be saved! Yet, by God's grace the world weathered the crisis of the flood and got the promise that life would continue. So God made plans for life to continue, but more, God made plans for it to get better, based on

his steadfast love and mercy. Let the healing begin.

So you too still live in a dangerous world, but the forces of evil, yet active, are now contained. Mark doesn't disclose the outcome of Jesus' temptation, but the outcome is obvious when diseases are healed and demons are thrown out. The good news is that in a dangerous world you can be safe. There isn't a moment in your life when God doesn't remember what he promised. God is capable of "forgetting" your sin by remembering Christ who has been "made sin" for you. Thanks be to him, God knows how to remember and how to forget.

Second Sunday in Lent
March 9, 2003

Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16
Psalm 22:22–30 (NRSV 22:23–31)
Romans 4:13–25
Mark 8:31–38

First Reading

"He was as good as dead"—which is not good, except that for God it didn't make that much difference. In fact Abram and Sarai, old as they were, lived a remarkably active life for the shape they were in. It was covenant time again. But God kept getting the cart before the horse. Abram thought God's covenant with him and with his descendants would have no significance as long as Sarai didn't produce a son, and time had already run out. Ignore that for now. Let's get on with the covenant.

This time the covenant brings some obligations: "Walk before me and be perfect," and later, "I (and no one else) will be God to you and to your offspring." And there is the obligation to observe the rite of circumcision (Gen 17:9–14). In Paul's view, the blessings of Gen 17:6 happily precede circumcision, so none of the nations are excluded by this new stipulation! But back to the promises. The land, all the land of Canaan, in which Abraham is a *ger*, a resident alien, is to belong to him and to his children. To seal his promise, God gave Abraham ("father of a crowd") and Sarah their new names, and again *only the promise* of a son. The gift of a son would also be the gift of life, and so God guarantees life to Abraham and Sarah.

In the early portion of Psalm 22 the agony of the sufferer is articulated with vivid detail. When you join the reading of the psalm, persuasive prayer has already found an ear: "You have rescued me" (v. 21). Again, an individual lament concludes with public testimony of recovery and restoration to life. Here not only the attending congregation but "all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD." Even more inclusively, that remembrance is shared by past generations already in the dust and future ones yet unborn!

Paul, too, catches the broader vision of Abraham's promise in Romans 4. Abraham's domain is not restricted to Canaan but incorporates the world! That's because the rule of law is exclusive, while the reign of grace, which now has taken over, is inclusive. Grace embraces all of Abraham's descendants among whom the Gentiles are now numbered. For Paul, the nations coming from the "ancestor of a multitude" are not limited to those whom Abraham has physically begotten. Paul also catches the significance of Abraham's faith, essentially his trust in the Creator's ability to make something that isn't there come into being, such as life for the dead (or those as good as dead). So Paul commends this same faith to his readers, that is, to trust in this same Creator who raised Jesus.

Today's reading from Mark 8 is at the

center of Mark's good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus called to the crowd *with his disciples*, If *any people* want to come after me, let them carry with them their cross (v. 34). It's all about life, for the world. It's time to teach crowds and disciples in plain speech, no longer in parables. "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering." Jesus is the Messiah, but for the disciples and Peter and for the crowd "Messiah" would still be metaphor. It doesn't begin to communicate the radical nature of Jesus' career. He will be rejected by the religious leadership, perhaps also by the world, and misunderstood by his disciples. Only after the resurrection will the disciples and the world be able to confess Christ with the proper understanding.

That informed confession is to be reflected in a radical understanding of discipleship. "Those who want to save their life will lose it. . . ." These are hard sayings, because if you wish to talk about life, how do you speak clearly about it to your listeners? What is life? What is it that you save? Do *you* save it, and how? What is left when you renounce everything that has temporal value?

Pastoral Reflections

Life is the objective of the Creator and the desire of every creature. Death has been in contention with life practically from the start. Are you a pawn in the contest? Does God have creator rights to you? Does Satan have reality on his side? God has exclusive redemptive rights! What is your role in the struggle as to who will claim you? The preacher's responsibility is, in some sort of balance, to invite belief in her or his listeners and to counsel the sanctified life. There is clearly an active role in the outcome for the individual. Each day you, the preacher, strive to clarify these roles in terms of your people's temptations and misfortunes, joys and successes, genuine values and relationships, so that those who want to lose (or keep) their lives for Christ's sake and the gospel's can do so.

Third Sunday in Lent
March 16, 2003

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

First Reading

Exodus 20 contains the preamble, the historical foundation, and the stipulations portions of the Sinai covenant. George Mendenhall, in *Ancient Israel's Faith and History* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 61, points out that the ten words are not to be regarded as demands or even commands but commitments. They were freely adopted at Sinai, forming community under the reign of God. They were personal, religious, and fundamental. They reflected a value system. To uphold these values is to assert God's "worth-ship" and to make a confession about the character of the god of the community.

In the light of Psalm 19, God, who has created the heavens, the members of which perform in perfect harmony, is also the creator of the Torah. There are six synonyms for the covenantal stipulations beginning with verse 7: law, decree, precept, commandment, fear of the Lord, ordinance. And how they are valued is demonstrated in the worth-shipful attitude of the psalmist. His high praise for their worth is born of gratitude for the gift of Torah. For the community, gratitude for rescue from Egypt is the chief reason for embracing the commitments. In keeping them, harmony and good

fortune are going to continue. And yet there is the constant danger of error and insolence, of distorting the truth, putting human life in jeopardy, endangering the family, and so on. These "ten commitments" warn against such errors and are effective in keeping in check those forces that would weaken those commitments and drive a wedge into the community.

The Corinthians reading is also about worth-ship and values, loyalty, and the reality about the God of the Corinthian church. Surprisingly, it is possible to lose sight of the Christian commitment when the church is endowed with a plethora of gifts of the Spirit. And the Corinthians had gifts: "You have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind" (v. 5). And they had a variety of gifted leaders (Paul, Apollos, Cephas, not to mention Christ). What causes the community to falter in spite of its endowments? Distraction from the real things of God, which, in terms of this passage, is the utter absurdity of the cross in contrast to the accumulated wisdom of this world.

How can the established church stay on course? Through the foolishness of preaching the Crucified. Foolishness is not the essence of the cross and its proclamation, but its preaching is regarded as such in the eyes of Jews and Greeks, who insist on concrete proof of this reality about God. No other proof will be furnished than the confession of those who are saved.

Early in his ministry Jesus protested against the failure of the temple to proclaim in spirit and truth the worth-ship of God (John 2). The temple infrastructure, created for convenience, perpetuated the false value (worship) of sacrifice over true worship. The mild response of the Jewish leaders to Jesus' disruptive behavior in clearing out the temple is to request a sign, so they too, presumably, might believe the reality about God. The ambiguity of Jesus' saying about the temple's destruction and the resulting misunderstanding puts the Jewish leaders in league with those who don't comprehend the foolishness of the cross. For John the crucified Christ is the exalted Christ. The sign is Christ's being raised from the dead, which prompted the disciples to remember his words and believe the Scriptures.

Pastoral Reflections

The church these days is heavily endowed with worldly treasure and is easily distracted. The crystal cathedral's virtual denial of the cross week after week is a parade example of distraction. Success, wisdom, and philanthropy are not sinful in themselves. But they are everywhere praised and given priority. Crystal power sanctifies these, spiritualizes them, and counsels gratitude and commitment in kind. Such worth-ship describes a Baal-like god astride the clouds and not one lifted high upon the cross. In crossless preaching Christ is absent, and so is the power and wisdom of God. We are called to preach the foolish Christ who emptied himself on the cross but whose name is above every name.

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 23, 2003

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

First Reading

The world is a dangerous place. Some places are less hospitable than others, e.g., wilderness and sea (Ps 107:4, 23). Wilderness is the place of temptation. The Spirit drove Jesus there. Moses escorted the refugees from Egypt there. The Israelites yielded, but Jesus prevailed. The people's patience grew short over issues of food and water, standing for practically every aspect of their wandering, to fulfill "the desires of flesh and senses" (Eph 2:3). The serpent, still the agent of destruction, this time appeared after the temptation and bit and killed. Intruding into this world's affairs is the ruler of the power of the air seducing to disobedience and disrupting the progress of God's people in reaching their goal.

In each of these first three readings, you can follow a clear sequence. Sickness and death are the direct result of sin. "Some were sick through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities endured affliction" (Ps 107:17). The hostility of the environment, as in the case of the wilderness, both prompts rebellion and punishes. Following the course of this world "You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived." But there is also intervention. The Israelites prayed and asked Moses to intervene. The ones who were sick cried to the Lord in their distress. "But God, who is rich in mercy. . . ." Then there is restoration. The word "forgive" isn't used in the sequence. But the words "Make alive" and "Heal" are there.

The world is the domicile of God's people. Yet this environment is not benign. But it is here that the Son of Man, a human, descends (John 3:13) to make his home. The purpose? To reveal to us things both earthly and heavenly, that is, what God is accomplishing on earth through his only Son's works and words. The world and its people are worth saving. The ascent, the exaltation, of the Son of Man begins with his being lifted up on the cross, just as Moses lifted up the saving serpent on a standard as the ultimate sign of God's love for all the world to see.

But Jesus' words and signs meet with a mixed response, always. Some believe and are not condemned, some do not believe and are. It doesn't take a judge to rule on this. People judge themselves by believing or not believing, by loving the light or the darkness, by doing or not doing what is true.

Pastoral Reflections

In the face of hardships some shake their fist at God; others are drawn closer and their faith becomes stronger. Why some and not others is a mystery. Neither group has atheists. The problem isn't defined as one of having other gods. It's simply a matter of believing or not believing. The evidence of God's love is there for all to see and experience. The words, the signs, the Living Water, the Bread of Heaven are all provided. Alienation is traceable to a lack of tolerance for the extreme conditions of the world, the presence of evil powers, or the human rebellious nature (the devil, the world, and the flesh). But God doesn't give up on you. You are still his piece of work. You are still and will always be the object of God's love.

Fifth Sunday in Lent
March 30, 2003

Jeremiah 31:31–34
Psalm 51:1–13 (NRSV 1–12)
Hebrews 5:5–10
John 12:20–33

First Reading

"The days are surely coming," "on that day," "at that time," and all the future tenses, starting with Jeremiah 30, are features of the "Scroll of Hope." The message is one of restoration for Jacob and for Judah. Everything will be "new." For the rebuilt and replanted community the covenant is to be new, too, different from the old one. Today when something is advertised as being new and better, you can be sure that it is the same old thing in a new package, maybe a new patent, and of course at "popular" (read "higher") price.

So what is new? The old active ingredient in the covenant is "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." That can't be changed. Is God just taking the old covenant out of mothballs and repackaging it now that the people are back home? Instead of an external writing on stone or on parchment, which can be destroyed (see Jer 36:20–26), the law, says the prophet, will be written on the people's hearts. It is to be internal. So its effectiveness will not depend on teaching, which is subject to deception. If it's inside, it is now part of their created makeup. There will be a new commitment by the people, who themselves are new (verse 27). They shall "know" the Lord. Their loyalty will be properly and permanently in place.

The truth which God desires in the inward being is achieved when God creates a clean heart and a new and right spirit (Psalm 51). This is the clue to the essence of the new covenant. The person, just as the community, becomes a new creation. Has God finally succeeded in making a super race, people who can consistently know and perform God's expectations? Rather God declares that a new start for the community and for the individual is always possible. The people of God are never abandoned by God.

No, there is not a spiritually super race. But there is one who is appointed to hold God's people close, who is the Son of God and yet thoroughly human, who joins humanity (Hebrews 5). The marks of his honored station as high priest are his compassion and suffering (sympathy). The description of his obedience as offering up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears is somewhat startling. But it signals the Son's utter humanity. His suffering is a model of obedience for those who pledge to keep the covenantal commitments.

Obedience, suffering, and martyrdom are also the theme of Jesus' words in John 12. The Greeks came to see Jesus. They are those "other sheep" for whom he will lay down his life (John 10). The hour for his glorification has arrived. It is time for his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Any reluctance to go through with his glorification (think of Gethsemane in the synoptic Gospels) is overcome by Jesus' prayer, "Father, glorify your name." The wonderful parable about the seed, which, by falling into the earth and dying becomes productive, connects the glorification of the Son of Man with that of his followers. Fruit can be produced only through dying. Again, as in Mark 8 (Lent 2), saving/loving life is opposite to losing/hating one's life, the former having the effect of losing it, the latter of keeping it. Serving Jesus means continuing in the effort to drive out the ruler of this world, whose power is already broken. To be honored by the Father is the reward.

Pastoral Reflections
"Hallowed be your name" and "Your kingdom come" and "Your will be done" are really the same prayer as "Father, glorify your name." The believer sets out on a new course of commitments, a matter of the newly fashioned heart created in Baptism by the Spirit, and gets ready to sacrifice her or his life.

Very few suffer a violent end these days for the sake of the gospel. What relevance can talk of martyrdom and the offering of such prayers have for today's disciple? Think of the kinds of mischief the "ruler of this world" is still able to do. Think of the ways you try to counter this mischief inside of you and around you. Pray for guidance to discern how God's will can be accomplished. Also be assured that in your own death, even when peaceful, the Father will honor you. John 12:23–26 is still an appropriate part of the Christian burial rite.

Sixth Sunday in Lent Passion/Palm Sunday April 6, 2003

Mark 11:1–11 or John 12:12–16
Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29
Isaiah 50:4–9a
Psalm 31:9–16
Philippians 2:5–11
Mark 14:1–15:47
or Mark 15:1–39 [40–47]

First Reading
Mark's account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11) is brief and spare. Half of the story is about procuring the colt. His disciples negotiate, Jesus' requirements are met, and the parade begins. The crowd seems somewhat restrained, giving him two cheers (we give him three) surrounding two beatitudes, both from Ps 118:25–26, and part of the Passover seder. The NRSV gives the original meaning of hosanna, "Save us, we beseech you, O Lord." But the cry was also a simple expression of praise to God. This was an occasion of praise, but the celebration didn't extend beyond Jesus' entry into the city. Once inside, there was a calm, authoritative, take-charge atmosphere. According to Mark, the fireworks were to begin the next day.

John's version has crowds meeting Jesus with palms in hand. Some with him (verse 17) had witnessed the raising of Lazarus. The Pharisees got it right (v. 19), "The whole world has gone after him!" And in fact Jesus was drawing all to himself, not as the king some might imagine but as one whose "kingdom is not of this world," yet one who gives life to all the world. In the face of this glorious rule the Jewish leaders admit they are helpless.

A third servant poem from Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 50) casts the servant in the role of teacher. Continuing attempts to identify the servant by making comparison to Jeremiah or identification with Moses, for example, seem to miss the mark. Perhaps it is better just to ask, What is God doing through the servant? Daily the teacher/servant receives instruction from God and mediates the message to "the weary." The risk of rejection develops into hostility, but this does not deter the teacher. The source of these insults, the rationale for the abusive action, is unclear, since the servant's mission is to proclaim God's intervention and restoration for the weary community. "I did not hide my face from humiliation . . . I have not been humiliated." Acts of abuse do not produce the desired psychological effect in the teacher or a loss of resolve. The servant acknowledges God's hand both in subjecting him to pain and in helping him through the ordeal.

Akin to the servant, the psalmist's total life is a wreck, a shattered pot, fit only to thrown away (Psalm 31). His plight doesn't elicit even the slightest pity. It's hard to improve on this description of complete isolation. *But,* as the servant also acknowledges, the Lord comes for deliverance. The prayer for salvation, as always, is based on trust in the Lord's steadfast love.

Jesus' biographers, noting parallels in the Psalms and in the servant poems, saw that in his suffering he fulfilled the pattern of Old Testament sufferers. But the hymn in Philippians says Jesus did it his way and established a new pattern of servanthood. (I still prefer "servant" to "slave" for the Greek word *doulos.*) Jesus was not the helpless victim. He deliberately emptied himself of any power. "Became obedient" reflects far more than a humble attitude; it signifies full subjection to the will of One beyond himself. The cross is the servant's ultimate objective and the point at which exaltation begins.

It is a terrible scene: betrayal, desertion, abuse, false witnesses rising up, denial by one of the inner circle, the crowd's insistence that Barabbas be freed, condemnation, vilification. Small wonder that Jesus cries out, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" But was he really forsaken? by God? Jesus' death was immediately followed by the veil of the temple being torn in two, from top to bottom. This was God's action. The sanctuary would no longer be the holy place. Another, not made with hands, was taking its place. The centurion, "who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last." And that centurion, seeing how Jesus died, spoke the truth: "Truly this man was God's Son!"

Pastoral Reflections

Now and then the church or the nation loses persons whose contributions to church and society have been profound. Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King, Jr. are two examples, as are other individuals have been cut down in their prime, who, if they had gone on, might have enriched our life, the arts, and scientific understanding incalculably. The inevitable question Why? may admit of some meaningful answer if one can get past thinking about what might have been and get a grasp on what God has given and continues to give us through them. The world cannot forget a Lincoln or a Gandhi, and their sacrifice sharpens what they spoke and did in their lives into guideposts and precepts for all time.

". . . even death on a cross . . . the name that is above every name." What would the church look like if Jesus' career had continued for another five or ten years? What additional gifts would we possess? I don't know if such speculation has any use. The gift of God was complete. The Spirit wakens the ear of today's servants day by day to celebrate this gift so that every tongue may confess that Jesus is Lord.

Maundy Thursday
April 10, 2003

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

First Reading

The people are to reset their calendar and get ready for a journey into the unknown (Exodus 20). Plans for the trip include elaborate instructions for preparing and eating the Passover. Clues in the text reveal that many of those rules were made up later in order to remember the deliverance from Egypt and to retell the story. The feast of which Paul speaks is for the followers of Jesus a successor to the Passover meal. Regrettably, among the Corinthians abusive practices attached themselves to the communal meal that stifled the remembrance of Christ's death and clouded the anticipation of his return.

The reading from John 13 concludes with Jesus' "new" commandment, to "love one another, just as I have loved you," giving this day its designation as Maundy (=mandate or commandment) Thursday. What is so new about this, since love was long acknowledged to be the summary of the (ten) commitments? Perhaps the answer can be found in considering a strikingly new commandment, the elaboration of which takes up the whole first part of the reading: "If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."

Jesus' washing the disciples' feet is set forth in the light of his status as one who "had come from God and was going to God" and of his full authority and knowledge of what would happen and how his disciples, exemplified by Peter, would oppose his action. They knew he was their Lord and Master, their teacher. Foot washing is a menial task, done only by slaves. That was the ancient social rule! If anything, disciples could show their devotion to their teacher by washing his feet.

When the disciples (Peter) objected to his washing them, Jesus told them that they may not understand now, but they will later. As true as this is, it wasn't sufficient to overcome the objection, so Jesus forced the issue: "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

It is only after the resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit that the disciples realized what Jesus was teaching. He becomes a slave, surrendering his status as Lord, Master, God, and gets ready to suffer and go to the cross, from which there is no turning back. Jesus' love for his disciples sets the pattern for his followers to wash one another's feet. This is a new reality of humility, love, self-sacrifice, of relationships, of *commitment*, among believers reflecting the closeness that Jesus has with his heavenly Father. That's what's new.

Pastoral Reflections

Jesus' new commandment is that his followers practice love, agape. Do we understand this self-giving love? We might well ask how we can possibly understand! We can try using all kinds of words to define it. It can begin to make some sense that way, and yet our poor words always fall short of making "love" something that we can grasp with the mind. What is needed is to experience God's great love, God's own agape, richly bestowed in Jesus. The truth of love cannot be distilled by some logical or lexical analysis, but it can be verified in our experience of God's unstinted giving.

In all of this there's a kind of learning curve. "You don't know now," said Jesus. But then moments later he says, "Do you know what I have done to you?" And the

evangelist (John 13:14–15) goes on to explain it for *us*. But the disciples present with Jesus on that ancient occasion need more time before they can come to understand it. We talk about a "teachable moment," a useful concept. But that can be a *long* moment. There is an appropriate instant when the teaching can begin—with a parable, a sign, a saying. Something is taught, something learned on the spot. But reverberations of an original moment also offer time for reflection and learning. The truth of words, parables, and precepts sinks in over time.

What do faith, God, and the Spirit, have to do with the learning curve, the interminable teachable moment? Only God can take things like foot washing, loving, and eating the sacramental meal and make them real and redemptive in our lives. And God does it by means of the ongoing tutoring of the Spirit.

Good Friday
April 11, 2003

Isaiah 52:13—53:12
Psalm 22
Hebrews 10:16–25
or Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9)

First Reading

The unheard of is now being told. The servant was successful but didn't live to express his triumph in person (Isaiah 52). By contrast, the psalmist (Psalm 22) recovered to deliver his praise personally and to make good his vows in the congregation; his life was restored. So the servant's *curriculum vitae* becomes the confession of those who have witnessed the results of his life. From birth, through his suffering, and matters leading up to his death and burial, a modern observer might advise the servant to "get a life." His contemporaries shunned him. Who could perceive that this disfigurement and humiliation was to be a means by which God would accomplish his purposes?

The whole business was inelegant at best. But what an amazing outcome: the servant gave his life, and in so doing he gave a life to those who observed his suffering. Observers came to realize what had happened. The servant had taken *their* sicknesses, *their* sorrows, *their* blows, *their* sins, and had carried them off. This time no celebrity, no historical hero, no intellectual, just a common, weak human being, at God's appointment, was able to work this change in his fellow humans. They acknowledged that their survival was the result of the work of the servant.

Hebrews revisits two emphases from recent weeks: the new covenant and the sanctuary veil. The quotation from Jeremiah makes the application of the covenant inclusive, not limited to Israel and Judah. The covenant inscribes the law on heart and mind. The effect is that the Lord will remember sins and lawless deeds no more. That spells forgiveness, total and comprehensive. And where there is such forgiveness, sin offerings are abolished. This Jesus entered the inner place of the veil (10:14) and "by a single offering perfected for all time those who are sanctified." The sanctuary veil, which until now had the effect of confining God's presence, is penetrated by Jesus and redefines God's presence among his people. "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!" (Charles Wesley, *LBW* #60)

The Fourth Gospel's passion narrative is a priceless legacy. The title "king of the Jews," written uncompromisingly in three languages for all to read, accorded Jesus his rightful place on the judgment seat of the world (19:13). In effect Pontius Pilate is

proclaiming, "Here is the king!"

We are reminded again and again that Jesus knew all that would happen. Indeed, he predicted much of it. John pictures Jesus as being completely in charge. Jesus is not sentenced by the Jewish leaders. Pilate does not pronounce judgment. He makes repeated attempts to release Jesus. Yet Pilate's question, "What is truth?" reveals that he, too, is not among those who know Jesus as "the way, the truth, and the life." The accusation "He has claimed to be the Son of God" puts fear into Pilate, but whether this is "the fear of God" or the gods or whether it reflects Pilate's helplessness in making a judgment is not clear. But Jesus is not helpless, and in the proceedings the religious and political authorities bring judgment on themselves.

In John's account of the passion Jesus carries his own cross, and from the cross he reigns as king. John mentions nothing of agony or mocking or insults. No darkness covers the earth from noon till 3. Instead of isolation Jesus is portrayed in the company of his mother and other women and of the disciple whom he loved. Jesus' final word, "It is finished," is a majestic declaration that he has completed the sacred work given to him by the One who sent him.

Pastoral Reflections

Attendance at Good Friday services has steadily fallen off in the past decade or so. All sorts of reasons are suggested as to why this is so. But perhaps the overarching reason is that it is not easy to come to terms with Good Friday, and as a result, it is thought the problem can largely be overcome by ignoring it. In this effort to ignore, there is a significant level of cooperation between the church and the world.

The role of Jesus as High Priest becomes superfluous if sin doesn't need to be forgiven. If sacrifices can become obsolete, cannot sin with some effort be made obsolete as well? If monarchies, while not ruling well their own households, lose their grip on the rule of nations, should we further entertain any thoughts of the rule of the King on earth or even in heaven?

But the question "What is truth?" will in one form or another continue to challenge and haunt those who acknowledge a need to be forgiven and to be governed. There will be skeptics, but there will be those who know that the Truth, the Way, and the Life have not disappeared from the earth but still resides with us, and the closer we are drawn to the Cross, the better our access to a share in that Life.

Volume 29 Index

Albrecht, Christian. "Marriage as a Religious and a Legal Concept," 29:6 (December) 421–23.

Beaudoin, Tom. "The Church: Defender of Theocapitalism?" 29:5 (October) 362–87.

———. "I Was Imprisoned by Subjectivity and You Visited Me: Bonhoeffer and Foucault on the Way to a Postmodern Christian Self," 29:5 (October) 341–61.

Berg, David. "'Blessed Are They upon God's Holy Mountain': Reflections on Luke 6:17–26," 29:6 (December) 452–55.

Bultmann, Christoph. "Luther on Gender Relations—Just One Reading of Genesis?" 29:6 (December) 424–28.

Jackelén, Antje. "(Homo)Sexuality—Perspectives from Church, Society, and Theology," 29:4 (August) 265–72.

Klein, Ralph W. "Any Team Can Have a Bad Century," 29:3 (June) 162–64.

———. "Can the Church Think Again?" 29:1 (February) 2–4.

———. "The Hein Fry Lectures from 2001," 29:5 (October) 322–25.

———. "New Pencils and New Crayolas®," 29:6 (December) 418–20.

———. "So Great a Cloud of Witnesses," 29:4 (August) 242–45.

———. "Well, We're This Far," 29:2 (April) 82–84..

Krentz, Edgar. "A Book Worth Discussing: The Improved Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon," 29:2 (April) 132–35.

Litke, John D. "The Daughters of Zelophehad," 29:3 (June) 207–18.

Marshall, Ronald F. "Psalmic Bishops," 29:1 (February) 40–44.

Martinson, Roland. "Spiritual but Not Religious: Reaching an Invisible Generation," 29:5 (October) 326–40.

Mennecke-Haustein, Ute. "Windows on Life—Women after the Reformation," 29:6 (December) 429–36.

Murphy, George L. "Providence and Passion in Esther," 29:2 (April) 122–27.

Nessan, Craig L. "Christian Faith in Dialogue with Darwin: Evolutionary Biology and the Meaning of the Fall," 29:2 (April) 85–93.

Neumark, Heidi B. "Sermon for the Installation of a Bishop," 29:1 (February) 5–11.

Newsom, David. "Christian Ritual and the Meaningful Language for Loss," 29:4 (August) 282–87.

Nordin, John P. "There is Nothing on Earth That I Desire: A Commentary on Psalm 73," 29:4 (August) 258–64.

Phipps, William E. "Paul on "Unnatural" Sex," 29:2 (April) 128–31.

Robert, Dana L. "Gospel Bearers, Gender Barriers: Issues for Women and Mission Today," 29:4 (August) 246–57.

Rodríguez, José David Jr. "Culture and Evangelism: A Latino Perspective on the Lutheran Mission in Puerto Rico," 29:3 (June) 165–80.

Rodríguez, José D. Sr. "The Church: Sign and First Fruit of the Kingdom," 29:4 (August) 273–81.

Rollefson, John. "The Church and Same-Sex Relationships: A Case Study in Hermeneutical Ecology," 29:6 (December) 440–51.
———. "The Wit to Relax in the Face of the End," 29:2 (April) 115–21.
Satterlee, Craig. "Moving Toward More Frequent Communion: A Strategy," 29:3 (June) 197–206.
Schmalenberger, Jerry L. "Stewardship and War's Collateral Damage," 29:6 (December) 456–58.
Schroeder, Edward H. "Mosaic and Christic Ethos in the Gospel of John," 29:3 (June) 189–96.
Schulte, Andrea. "Martin Luther and Female Education," 29:6 (December) 437–39.
Seastrand, Paul J. "Confessional Subscription and Church Fellowship in the ELCA and in the LCMS," 29:2 (April) 100–114.
Stumme, Wayne C. "Workplace Justice and the Church," 29:2 (April) 94–99.
Sundermeier, Theo. "Understanding the Stranger: Aspects of Interreligious Hermeneutics," 29:3 (June) 181–88.
Thomsen, Mark. "Two Biblical Models for Relating to the Ethnic and Religious Other," 29:1 (February) 28–33.
Warner, Anita R. "Fulfilling All Righteousness: The Death of Jesus in Matthew," 29:1 (February) 12–19.
Weyermann, Andrew M. "Preaching in the Service of God," 29:1 (February) 34–39.
Williams, Lawrence H. "Evangelical Challenges Facing Indigenous African Christians: Rejection and Accommodation," 29:1 (February) 20–27.

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