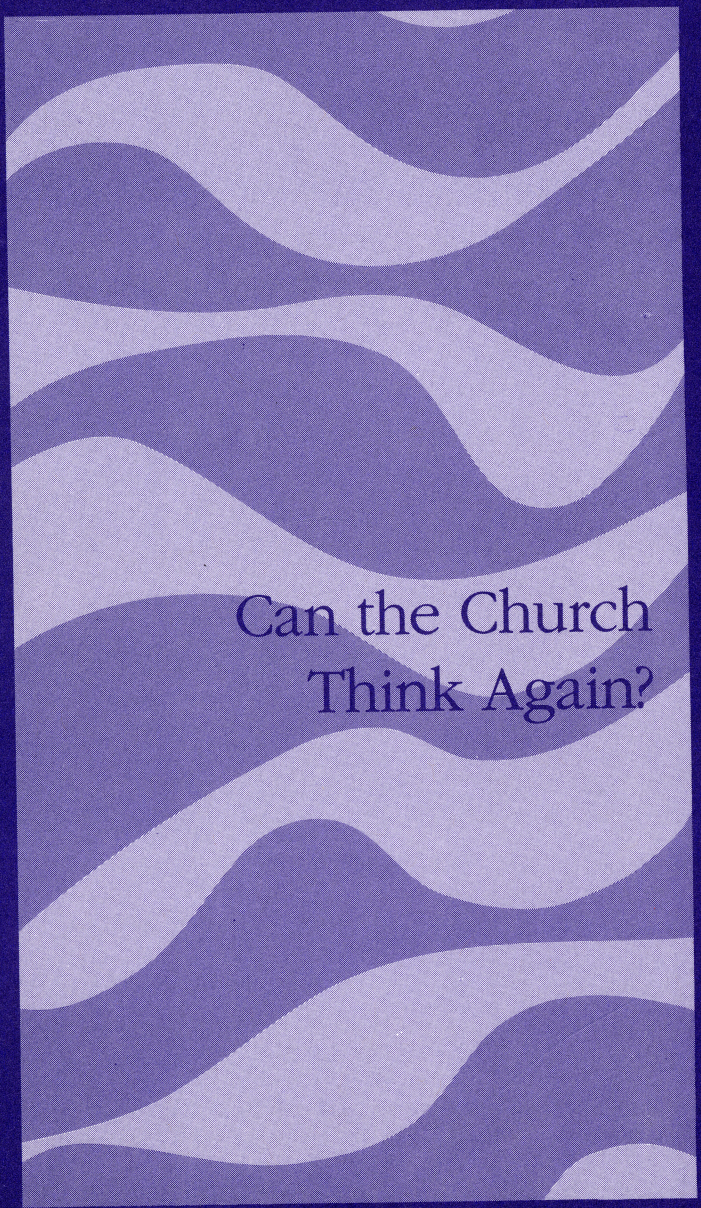
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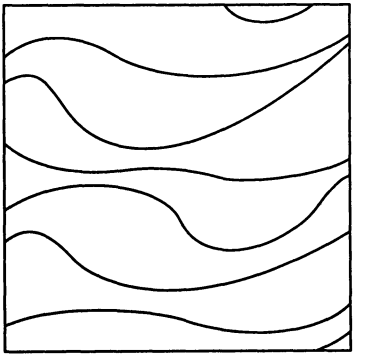
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Can the Church Think Again?

At the recent Lutheran breakfast at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, John Cobb spoke on this intriguing question. He reminded us that the great philosophers for most of the last two millennia were Christians, but that such thinking has now become a secular, academic discipline. His question has the snide implication that the church right now is not thinking or at least not thinking great thoughts. He reminded all of us would-be scholars that research is not necessarily thinking, at least not as he defined it. His stirring speech was short on specific proposals, but he noted that we live in a culture of Mammon (the "patriotic" thing to do last fall was to shop!) and militarism and wondered out loud who from the church might raise a question about those issues for public discussion.

The essays in this issue made me think as I edited them, and I hope they will do the same for you. These six distinct thinkers are raising important issues for us to consider—and to consider sharing with those in our charge and with the larger public, which is our ultimate mission. Can we answer Cobb's question with an initial Yes?

Heidi B. Neumark preached at the installation service for ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson at Rockefeller Chapel in Chicago on October 6, 2001. She paired Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E. and New York on September 11, 2001, great cities that fell to everyone's consternation. Her own ministry is among victims of the latter attack *and* among victims of the daily ravages of injustice. She told the new bishop that we all would be watching his feet—where he walked and visited, where he led or was led. She dreamed of a day when pastors would clamor to be sent to Ground Zero—in North Dakota and in the South Bronx. Second Isaiah pointed toward feet heading toward the waste places of Jerusalem and said to his audience (and to us): "Follow those feet." She saw the dust on a slain firefighter's boots as dust that bore a message of saving love, dust from Calvary. She urged Bishop Hanson to lead us to the Ground Zeros of the world. Jesus came and now comes in the shape of our own vulnerability. We only need to follow his feet.

Anita R. Warner demonstrates how in the passion account according to Matthew Jesus fulfills all righteousness. Among other things, her essay gives a good orientation to the social location and structural outline of Matthew, important data for preachers in this year of Matthew. Righteousness in Matthew is the obedience of the Son of God, that shows forth the kingdom of

heaven. Every one of Jesus' thirty-six sayings about the kingdom can be understood to be fulfilled in Matthew's passion narrative. Jesus fulfilled all righteousness by first teaching about God's righteousness and then by enacting his own teachings on righteousness in his passion. Despite the strong anti-Jewish rhetoric in Matthew, Gentiles and Jews alike are objects of the church's mission for the post-resurrection Matthean community. Matthew's theology is characterized by the forgiveness of sins achieved through the righteousness of God's beloved Son. Matthew's gospel shows that Jesus, the hope of Israel, is the savior of the nations

Lawrence A. Williams reports on the Africanization of Christianity in post-colonial Africa. Some African leaders see Western Christendom's presence in Africa as wholly imperialistic while others are willing to incorporate elements of Christianity into the fabric of African religious and cultural life. Some indigenous churches developed worship services that were accompanied by dancing and drumming and attracted a large number of traditional chiefs because of their acceptance of polygamy. Bishop Ambrose Moyo has argued that Lutheranism needs to be Africanized. Africans struggle to find a consistent and coherent approach to the issue of polygamy, but point out that many Americans themselves practice serial polygamy. Another Lutheran bishop, David L. Windibiziri, at the other end of the theological spectrum, sees two major threats to mainline evangelical Christianity in Nigeria: Islam and the rapid rise of indigenous Christianity. According to Osadolor Imasogie, Africans will not come to a valid understanding of Christ until Christ is presented from within their world views. Today evangelical Christianity, Africanization, and indigenization are being played out, with the move towards indigenization gaining the lead.

Mark Thomsen discusses two models for relating to the ethnic and religious other. In Deuteronomy Moses declares that if the danger of religious pollution arises, the "other" must be systematically eliminated. Thomsen calls this the "sword-fire-hammer" model, and it is also practiced by the Maccabees and affirmed in some of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The other model, associated with the book of Jonah, Ruth, and Jesus, could be called the nonviolent, love your enemy model. Ruth is an honored Moabite in Israel, whereas Deuteronomy stated that no Moabite may enter the temple for ten generations. Jesus totally rejected the sword-fire-hammer model with his advice to turn the other cheek. Others in this train include Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi. This nonviolent, love your enemy model is still being raised up from death by the Abba and by the Spirit of Jesus.

Andrew M. Weyermann explores the relationship between preaching and the rest of the worship service. The fatal flaw of moralism is that the hearers

are exhorted to be and do on their own what they can be and do only in response to God's grace. Prayer at its best asks God to be in everything; it does not simply ask God for something. The liturgy places the sermon into the context of the faith of the church, and the sermon applies the word and deed of the liturgy to daily life. Preaching the Eucharist is reminding the hearers of what will happen when they encounter the Risen Christ at the Lord's table. The heart of the gospel is the proclamation of God's deed in raising the crucified Christ from the dead. Integrating a sermon with the worship service may transform what might have been a moralistic lecture into a means of grace evoking a lively response of faith from the people.

Ronald F. Marshall proposes that we reinstate Canon II from the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787 C.E.), which stipulates that everyone who is raised to the rank of the episcopate shall know the Psalter by heart. If this would create "Psalmic Bishops," the author hopes for rabbinic or teaching bishops as well. All this is good-natured rumination on what it will mean to us to have bishops in apostolic succession. But if, as the critics of CCM have been wont to say, bishops are by no means more exalted than regular clergy, then it would behoove all of us to memorize all 150 (or 151 if you work from the Septuagint). I think I'll start with Psalm 23. Deep in my memory is the knowledge that Luther found four hours a day to pray. Where did he find the time? I wonder if Luther ever attended a committee meeting. I know he was not pestered by e-mail.

The letter of Peter urges us to be ready to make our defense to anyone who demands from us an accounting of the hope that is in us (1 Pet 3:15). We live in a time and in a country desperately in need of hope. Has anyone ever offered us a penny for our thoughts, or demanded from us an accounting of the thoughts that are in us? Or can we just think out loud without being asked?

Ralph W. Klein, Editor

Words for a Bishop-Elect: Follow Those Feet!

Heidi B. Neumark
Transfiguration Lutheran Church
Bronx, New York

Sermon for the Installation of ELCA
Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson
October 6, 2001

Texts: Isaiah 52:7–10
2 Corinthians 4:1–7
Luke 10:1–12, 16–20

Beloved church . . .

What shall I preach? All flesh is grass.

"Teacher, the birds are on fire," said a kindergarten child seeing people falling in the blue sky. Earthen vessels crushed . . . as rescue workers sift and lift with care the pieces that remain.

What shall I preach? All flesh is grass . . . the grass withers, the flower fades. (Isa 40:6ff.)

The photographs multiply like flowers around our city—smiling faces, bright eyes, identifying details springing up here and there and everywhere. "He has a crescent-shaped scar on his shoulder." "She has a French manicure on her hands and feet." The papers wither and fade like hope in the rain.

The Word of God will stand forever.

But our own words. . . . Beloved . . . our own words? We don't even have the alphabet.

I am grateful to whomever chose the texts for today. Isaiah, in particular, that ancient correspondent from ground zero in the sixth century B.C, has been a good companion over these past weeks.

The world-renowned city that seemed invincible—attacked and capsized by terror. Towers collapsed in rubble, bronze temple pillars broken into pieces—the glorious architectural feat and economic seat in the great city, crashed and burning.

Jerusalem 587—New York 9/11

The sacred stones lie scattered at the head of every street, sighs Jeremiah in lamentation . . . *the precious children worth their weight in gold—how they are reckoned as earthen pots* . . . shattered (Lam 4:1–2)

Jerusalem 587—New York 9/11

Survivors in exile from all that was expected and secure . . . displaced people without foothold or language, wondering where is the Word that failed to stay this chaos—as tons of paper and all the words scatter and dissolve in ash.

We don't even have the alphabet.

Jerusalem 587—New York 9/11

A plume of bitter incense rises up from the rubble and falls again, dusting everything in

sight and out of sight, sticking in our throats and lungs, and souls. You hear power generators, metal cutters, trucks, cranes . . . but there is nothing there that one could call a song of joy breaking forth from those ruins. And yet, Isaiah tells us it will come. He too has searched through wreckage and lifted up dismembered pieces, letter by letter, phrase by phrase: *Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem . . . the Lord has comforted his people, the Lord has bared his holy arm.*

I have been visiting Felipe, who worked at the World Trade Center keeping the vending machines stocked with candy and chips. His wife Elba joined the via dolorosa of thousands, walking from hospital to hospital around the city, showing her picture of a proud immigrant from Honduras, a father with his arms around the two young children he adored. She held out the picture to anyone who would look, hoping against hope that she would find him alive. And then, miraculously, she did. Alive—but barely. Alive, but covered with burns from the fiery explosion. His children wanted to see their father, but Elba shook her head, and she was right. While most of his body was hidden beneath layers of dressing, the part of his face that showed was swollen and charred, disfigured beyond recognition.

He had only the blackened remains of one ear left, but the nurses told me they believed he could hear. As I was feeling sad and helpless, my husband Gregorio, also an adoring father to a son and daughter, said, "Why don't you have his children record a tape for him?—eso le dará ánimo—that will strengthen his soul." It gave me ánimo, too, something to do when one is helpless.

Ten-year-old Leonel knew immediately what he wanted to say: *I miss you, Daddy. I wish this never had to happen. I want you to come home. I love you, Daddy.* But five-year-old Rosiana was mute. I was holding a strange machine that had nothing to do with her father who was in some strange place her mother disappeared to every morning in tears and came home from at night in anxious exhaustion. Rosiana had nothing to say to the gray box. Why should she? But I was unreasonably desperate to capture her voice. "Do you like to sing?" I asked, and a smile played across Rosiana's face as she nodded. I turned on the recorder and Rosiana sang to her father: *"a,b,c,d,e,f,g . . ."* I played it for a week, holding the machine close to Felipe's ear like a cell phone, and saw no response. I also read psalms and prayed prayers, and yet I was sure that if anything would get through the fog of morphine and pain, it would be the voices of his children. Toward the end of the second week, after grafts on his arms and chest and after much of the dead skin on his face and head and ear had been removed, I played the tape again, and I saw Felipe, eyes still shut, trying to speak. I watched two words take shape on lips so fragile they bled from the effort: *Thank . . . you.* The words made no sound but filled the burn unit as a hymn of gratitude breaking forth from the ruins. Connection is everything. Relationship to God and to each other is life itself.

That is why we are here together today. That is why we in the ELCA are so grateful to you who have come from other parts of the world and from other church bodies to embody and affirm the connection we share as children of God and coheirs with Christ. Thanks be to God, and Thank you! Gracias! Danke! Terima Kassi! Tatenda! Asante Sana!

Permit me also to speak a word of profound gratitude on behalf of your sisters and brothers in New York. Your outpouring of love and prayer has held us up when the earth shook and the ground slipped away. The power of the communion of saints has transfused our bodies and souls

with strength to go on. There is power, wonder-working power, in the blood of the Lamb!

Two weeks ago, Bishop Anderson came and visited us in New York along with President Kieschneck and President Benke of the Missouri Synod, Gil Furst and Elaine Bryant of Lutheran Disaster Relief, and all the other regional bishops. Their presence was the tangible expression of the larger church standing with us at Ground Zero. I think that's why Isaiah begins with the feet: *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, good news, salvation.*

There's debate in some quarters about what we do with our hands, whose hands go on whose head. Be that as it may, Isaiah directs our attention to the feet. Church, I think that people just might be watching the apostolic succession of our feet. Mark, people will be watching your feet: where you walk, where you visit, where you lead, and where you allow yourself to be led.

Today we celebrate as we stand together. Recent tragedy has brought us together as a nation and a church.

Yes, and No. Lucia, a six-year-old girl from our church, was in McDonald's with her mother last week when another woman gave the child dirty looks, got up and spat at her. The mother's anger flew out in her native Spanish. "Que está haciendo? Está loca?"

"Oh . . . I didn't know you were Spanish. I thought she was one of those . . . Arab people."

"Que importa, what importance has that?"

"Well, you know this is a war."

Yes, we are more united, and No, we are not.

All over the city we see photos of the missing with names and stories. Day after day they are printed in our newspapers so that everyone can see all the faces, learn the names, and mourn the losses together as well we should— the loss not of statistics but of beloved individuals. In my neighborhood there are other memorials, too. Day after day I pass them: colorful graffiti memorials spray-painted on walls for teenagers slain on our streets in the prime of their life. In eighteen years, I have yet to see a single one remembered and mourned in our city's papers. The statistics of this violence are filed away, but not the loving details of these children whose Creator has counted every precious hair on their heads. Yes, we are more united, and No, we are not.

> Connection is everything. Relationship to God and to each other is life itself.

Literally within minutes of becoming aware of the terrorist attacks, people began clamoring to get to Ground Zero in New York City, to come in person and/or to send all kinds of resources, material and spiritual, for rescue, comfort, support, and the rebuilding of life. This stampede of generosity is still going on, and it's wonderful. You, church, have joined that marvelous stampede. And yet . . . Elie Wiesel, no stranger to the geography of terror and loss, has said that wherever human life is trampled, wherever the suffering of human beings goes on unchecked, there must be for us the center of the universe. In this case it is, but more often it is not.

The daily ravages of injustice are less eyecatching than the events of Sept. 11 but no less devastating in their human toll.

The daily ravages of injustice are less eyecatching than the events of Sept. 11 but no less devastating in their human toll. Millions of dollars have been raised to ensure that every family facing financial hardship or displacement because of this terrorist attack can be helped, but what of the many more who are already poor, starving, sick, and homeless? We are now moving in the right direction to stand with the 12-million-plus children orphaned by AIDS in Africa and the millions more threatened with the terror of this virus, but we could hardly claim that our response has been a stampede of generosity. We must confess that we have dragged our feet.

People are watching our feet, church. Before coming to Chicago, I spoke with a dear brother in Christ, Father John Grange, with whom I share community-organizing work in the Bronx. He spent Tuesday night at Ground Zero performing a gruesome liturgy—blessing body parts—piece after piece after piece, all night long. He told me that he hasn't slept well since. We are naturally horrified by dismembered bodies in the rubble, but the dismembering of our human family and even the very body of Christ by race and class, by sexism, by the divisions between those who are documented citizens and those who are not, those inside behind bars and those who hold the keys, and sometimes just petty matters, has ceased to horrify us. Many of us sleep right on through it. We have conferences and workshops, commissions and studies. We are in the city for good and it's all good, but it's not good enough. Just consider the almost crazed persistence and passion of those rescue workers carrying on without the results they hope for, insisting that there is still life to be found, lives to be restored. In the case of the firefighters, they see their lost brothers as family, family they simply cannot bear to abandon. What might that tell us?

Wouldn't it be something if candidates came out of our seminaries clamoring for bishops to send them to the twin centers of the universe, North Dakota and the South Bronx: "Bishop, please—I have my family to consider. That's my family there, bishop, down those dusty roads and fields, on those tractors and in those shelters and clinics and projects, behind those prison bars; I have my children to consider. Bishop, please send me there with them." Or pastors in their later years seeking a better call: "Bishop, now that I have more experience, at least to know how little I know, please consider me—please, I beg you, send me to Ground Zero. I have family there, and I have the baptismal certificate to prove it." And in that vision the Board of Pensions would say, "We are one family. We have one rate, in every city, in every region. Together we'll shoulder the burden, for we are one church." And the Mission Investment Fund would jump like Jeremiah to invest in a field of rubble with prophetic passion and faith in the restoration God was sure to work. Well, church, we are united—and we are not.

Mark, Isaiah also lived among a divided people. *By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.* The exiles wept as so many have wept these past weeks. *If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither* (Psalm 137). But time and distance tempered their grief and cut their sense of connection to those left behind in the inner city of Jerusalem. Interestingly for us, when the business leaders, artisans, soldiers, and priests were carried off to exile, *the captain of the guard left some of the poorest people of the land to be vinedressers and tillers of the soil* (2 Kings 25:12)—forsaken farmers left behind in the ruined city. So there, in what were considered the waste places of Jerusalem, you had a blend of North Dakota and the South Bronx all in one. A first-call delight!

A second and third generation in exile forgot the words and rites of their true home. Like many people today, they became willing captives to the wealth of Babylon and the lure of its new-age gods, but deep down they were as lost and disconnected as the forsaken ones back in the ruins. The rebuilding of Jerusalem was a dubious mission investment with no foreseeable return, no fringe benefits, and a lousy pension to boot. They didn't see the connection to their own renewal and life. They forgot that connection is everything, that relationship to God and to each other is life itself. And so they turned away, shaking off the dust that clung to their feet and their hearts.

And that is when Isaiah raises his voice with a blast of rhetorical passion meant to rouse those exiles from business as usual to consider some other feet, some beautiful feet, feet heading straight for the waste places of Jerusalem, where the arm of God is about to turn things around for everyone. "Follow those feet, folks!" shouts Isaiah. "Follow those feet!" *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, good news, and salvation. Who says, your God rules!*

Beautiful? The feet that walked upon those mountains must have been dusty, swollen, and sweaty.

On the Sunday after the attack, some of our Sunday School children walked down the block to our local fire station, which lost three men when the towers collapsed. They carried cards with prayers, Bible verses, and pictures they'd made. The children saw photographs of the fallen heroes over their lockers—and in one locker, a pair of boots caked in ash, boots recovered from the rubble. "Were those his real boots?" six-year-old Derrick asked.

Yes, they were.

"Was he wearing them in there?"

Yes, he was.

"Can I touch them?"

The fireman hesitated. These boots and every particle of dust they bore was precious. You could tell he didn't want that dust dislodged.

"Let's just look," I said, as another fireman appeared with a plate of homemade chocolate chip cookies for the children. The dust on those boots was not the dust Jesus counseled his followers to shake off. It was dust that had something holy about it, dust that bore a message of saving love, dust from Calvary. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger.* Beauty in those dirty boots because of where they went, and why.

Isaiah directed his exiles' gaze toward the mountains, where the beautiful feet appeared, with a Word that reached toward the ruins, because the prophet knew that the waste places of disconnect between the exiles and those left behind was the very space where God would gather them together and make all things new—together.

Gaze upon those holy arms bared for your sake and take heart.

Some people believe that the ELCA is heading straight to hell. Mark, please lead the stampede! (There's a line you can quote out of context!) Lead us to Ground Zero. Take us to the waste places of our disconnect from each other, from other nations, from the earth, from God, that we too may be made new all together.

Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people, the Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all nations. The holy arm in plain sight!—the Word become flesh. There it was in a dusty manger. The holy arm. Bared. Not armaments. Arms. So small. So vulnerable. So weak. Do you ever feel small, Mark? Do you feel inadequate to the task? powerless despite your position?

The scale of ruin at Ground Zero is beyond comprehension. It towers over the frail human forms whose tools, impressive in other contexts, appear tiny and ineffectual. There come days and times and circumstances that diminish us all. But gaze upon those holy arms bared for your sake and take heart. See how Jesus came and how he comes in the very shape of your own vulnerability.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. Remember that Jesus stayed and stays close to the dust, so close, making connections with those whom others brushed aside.

She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment (Luke 7:38). She ministered to him because his arm stretched out in peace had roused her from the ruins of exile where she'd been cast off by the religious establishment. "What beautiful feet," she must have thought—though surely they were rough and calloused from their daily walk—"what beautiful feet because they do not shrink from me," from the gifts of ministry she brought to him regardless of whomever she did or did not sleep with. "Do you know what kind of woman it is touching you?" they asked. He knew.

I worry about our interpretation of the gospel that tells us to wipe the dust from our feet when the Word we bear is not received as we see fit. How do we discern when to turn away from a person, place, a people, a quota, a goal? Might we confuse the cleaning off of feet with a Pilate-like washing off of hands when attempts at mission don't seem to yield results? It puzzles me that Jesus gives this advice to the seventy when he himself appears not to have followed it.

How often have we despised and rejected the mission entrusted to us—and does Jesus shake us off? How often are we captivated by the mega-successes of Babylon, distancing ourselves from those struggling in the rubble—and does Jesus shake us off? Hardly.

They spit on him and pounded the nails into his hands and his feet. There on Calvary's Mountain—the beautiful feet, the bared arm. According to Mark's passion narrative, *It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him* (Mk 15:25).

Nine o'clock.

"Teacher, the birds are on fire . . ."

Darkness came over the whole land. The earth shook and the rocks were split.

And silence from the epicenter.

My mouth is dried up like a potsherd. . . . You lay me in the dust of death (Ps 22:15).

This is my body given for you. The Word itself shattered like an earthen vessel. Connection is everything.

On Sunday. . . . Church? On Sunday! . . . after the attack, when I came back to church with the children who'd gone down to the firehouse, youth choir practice was going on. There was Nikia, who was living with a foster family after having been raped by her stepfather; Trini, who had crossed the border from Mexico hidden in a truck under a pile of vegetables; Shakira, Shana, and Tyrik, orphaned when their mother died from an asthma attack while smoking crack; Donell, six feet and sixteen years, who ordered girl Happy Meals on the way to Simba Camp so that his orphaned little sisters could get the toys; Milagros, wondering when the virus will turn to full-blown AIDS and take her mother. There was Crystal and the flock of nine siblings she shepherds to church each week where she herself, a teenager, rises above a household history fraught with abuse, homelessness, addiction, and death to be a leader among youth and teach Sunday School.

They stood there on the chancel singing their hearts out.

And then it dawned on me. It was happening before my very eyes: the ruins breaking forth together into singing. Ruins? Oh, no! More than conquerors, washed in our font, their names are written in the foundations of the New Jerusalem. Despite the many-headed beast that seeks to terrify and destroy, they stand before our sea of faces as conquerors beside the sea of glass with tambourines instead of harps, singing the victory song of the Lamb.

Clapping hands! stamping feet! They rock the church! Rockin' Jerusalem! All creation stands on tiptoe, says Paul, to see all the children of God coming into their own.

The trees of the fields clap their hands! The mountains skip like lambs!

He stood among them and said, "Peace be with you" (Jn 20:19).

Peace be with you, Mark!
Peace be with you, Beloved church!

His feet bring joy to the scattered ruins pulling them up in extraordinary power to their feet.

Go on your way; see, I am sending you out. . . .

. . . and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Mark, it's simple, really. Just follow those beautiful feet!

Fulfilling All Righteousness: The Death of Jesus in Matthew

Anita R. Warner
Advent Lutheran Church
Morgan Hill, California

In this paper I connect some of the literary and theological themes of Matthew's Gospel with the passion account in Matthew 26 and 27, showing that in Matthew's account, Jesus fulfills all righteousness in his passion and death.

The beginning of the passion

Jack Dean Kingsbury traces how, beginning with Jesus' own passion predictions (16:21; 17:22–23; 20:18–19), especially the first one, Jesus made it known that he, God, and the religious leaders will be the three principals involved in his passion.[1] Kingsbury writes,

> All three principals . . . desire the death of Jesus, though for different reasons. Through the unfolding of Matthew's story, these reasons have become increasingly clear. God has ordained the death of Jesus because it is to be the crucial event in the whole of the history of salvation (cf. 1:21; 20:28; 21:33–44; 22:1–10; also 26:28; 27:51). Jesus freely submits to suffering and death because he is, on the one hand, perfect in his devotion to God and, on the other hand, perfect in his service to humankind (cf. 4:1–11; 5:48; 20:28; 22:37–40; 26:26–29, 39, 42). No helpless victim, Jesus knows and predicts his fate, guides events both by what he does and by what he leaves undone so that they will issue in his death, and yet will die as one completely innocent of wrongdoing who will find in death the last and greatest test of his fealty to God. By contrast, the religious leaders desire the death of Jesus because they understand him to be a "deceiver," or false messiah (27:63). They rightly perceive that he stands as a mortal threat to their authority and therefore to the religion and society based on that authority (15:13, 21:43).[2]

Ulrich Luz points out that in the opening verses of Matthew's passion account, it is Jesus who speaks (26:1–2), reminding the disciples that it is now Passover, and that the time has come for the Son of Man to be crucified. Jesus is in fact in command of the situation; the religious leaders "only *seem* to be the principal actors in this play. In reality they are playing 'bit parts' and will lose the game."[3]

Matthew's Gospel

Kingsbury has called Matthew's Gospel "a story about Jesus." He offers the following structure of the Gospel:[4]

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[1] Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 84.

[2] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 84–85.

[3] Ulrich Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. J. B. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 133.

Part I—The Presentation of Jesus (1:1–4:6) (or the person of Jesus Messiah)

Part II—Ministry of Jesus to Israel (4:17–11:1) and Israel's Repudiation of Jesus (11:2–16:20) (or, taken as a whole, 4:7–16:20, the proclamation of Jesus Messiah)

Part III—Journey of Jesus to Jerusalem and his Suffering, Death and Resurrection (16:21–28:20) (or, the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Messiah)

This structural outline gives priority to the narrative in Matthew and takes a christological approach. Another important structural feature of this gospel is Jesus' five discourses. In 1930 Benjamin Bacon described Matthew as "an early Christian catechism," noting especially its five discourses, and outlined its content according to church-related themes:[5]

Preamble: Infancy Narrative (chaps. 1–2)

Book 1: Discipleship (3–7)
- A. Narrative (3–4)
- B. Sermon on the Mount (5–7)

Book 2: Apostleship (8–10)
- A. Narrative (8–9)
- B. Missionary Discourse (10)

Book 3: Hiding of the Revelation (11–13)
- A. Narrative (11–12)
- B. Parable Discourse (13)

Book 4: Church Administration (14–18)
- A. Narrative (14–17)
- B. Community Discourse (18)

Book 5: Judgment
- A. Narrative (19–23)
- B. Eschatological Discourse (24–25)

Epilogue: Passion and Resurrection (26–28)

While Bacon's outline highlights some important features of Matthew's Gospel, I believe it does not give enough emphasis to the passion (and resurrection), which, as I will show, Matthew presents not as an epilogue or even as climax but rather as the *fulfillment* of Jesus' own life and teachings, as well as of the Old Testament ("the Law and the Prophets").

Matthew was most likely written between 80 and 90 C.E. Most scholars believe it to be the work of a Jewish Christian community, most likely outside Palestine. The church is in transition and struggling with the relationship between church and synagogue. Kingsbury[6] and others[7] claim to find hints in the gospel of a relatively affluent urban church. The location of the Matthean community most often proposed is Antioch, the capital of Syria. A predominantly Greek-speaking metropolis with the largest Jewish population in Syria, it was the home of a Christian community founded in the late 30s by a Hellenistic group of Jewish Christians who began a circumcision-free mission at Antioch (cf. Acts 11:19-26).

Matthew used nearly all of Mark's material, while making some significant changes to Mark. He also made use of the source known as Q and some unique material. Matthew is particularly interested in showing Jesus as the one who fulfills the law and the prophets (5:17) and uses the Old Testament to interpret Jesus' birth, life, public ministry, and death. Although the gospel carries the name of the tax collector–

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[4] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 40, and Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989).

[5] Mark Allen Powell, *Fortress Introduction to The Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 66–67.

[6] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 152.

[7] Cf. Amy-Jill Levine, "The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Social History," *Studies in Bible and Early Christianity* 14 (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 1988).

turned disciple (9:9), its author is better described as a "scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven [who] is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (13:52).[8]

For us in this way to fulfill all righteousness

Matthew contains exactly twelve *formal fulfillment citations*, passages that claim that what is reported about Jesus "happened to fulfill what was written in the prophets": 1:22–23; 2:5–6; 2:15; 2:17–18; 2:23; 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:14–15; 13:35; 21:4–5; 27:9–10. The number twelve often symbolizes Israel, since in the Old Testament Israel's offspring consisted of twelve tribes.[9]

The four times Jesus utters "fulfill" in Matthew which are not formal citations from Old Testament prophets all refer to Jesus himself bringing about God's fulfillment through participating in God's righteousness: at his baptism by John (3:15), the beginning of his teaching ministry (5:17), and his betrayal and passion (26:54 and 56).

Righteousness, an important theme throughout Matthew, is then *the obedience of the Son of God.* There are two large-scale inclusions in the Gospel of Matthew.

> After the notion of "God with us" has formed the outer brackets of the Gospel (1:23; 28:20), an inner bracket is added dealing with the obedience of the Son of God (3:13–4:11; 27:38–54). The same thought recurs in the middle of the Gospel. Once Peter has acknowledged the Son of God (16:16–17), Jesus points the disciples to the path of obedience, which is that of suffering (16:21ff.). It is precisely here that the disciples encounter failure. As the Matthean story will later show, God is present precisely by being with the obedient Son, whose path leads to suffering and death. He who, on the mountain, rejected the devil's offer of world domination (4:8–10), and chose the path of obedience, will for this very reason, again on a mountain, be granted all power in heaven and on earth at the end of his chosen path of obedience (28: 16-20).[10]

This righteousness of the obedient Son of God stands in contrast to the righteousness of the religious leaders (5:20), who "have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (23:23). The religious leaders in Matthew are unwilling to give this true righteousness its (his) due.

This righteousness, this obedience of the Son of God, shows forth the kingdom of heaven, another important theme in Matthew. The kingdom of heaven has both a present and future aspect. Jesus inaugurates the kingdom of heaven through his public ministry, passion, and resurrection. Moreover, every one of Jesus' thirty-six sayings about the kingdom of heaven (or of God) can be seen or understood to be fulfilled in Matthew's passion narrative.

Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds

Beginning with the Sermon on the Mount, and through the rest of the gospel, Jesus the teacher of wisdom (13:54) is presented as the Teacher of Righteousness. In the passion narrative in Matthew Jesus actively fulfills his own teachings on the demands of righteousness.

Jesus had taught his disciples not to swear at all (5:33–37); as he stood on trial before the high priest, who put him "under

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[8] Powell, *Fortress Introduction to The Gospels*, 72.

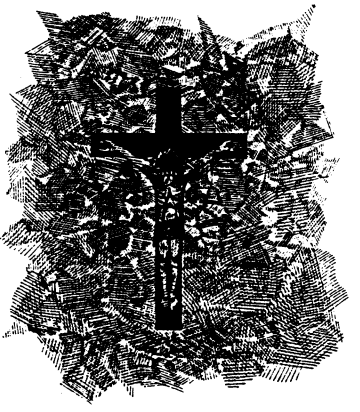
[9] Powell, 66.

[10] Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, 36–37.

oath before the living God, [to] tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God," Jesus answered, "You have said so" (26:64). John Carroll and Joel Green point out that "the expression σὺ εἶπας here might be paraphrased, 'It is as you have said.' The reply tacitly affirms the question, yet returns to the speaker the burden of accepting the truth spoken."[11] Thus Jesus answered both the high priest (26:64) and Pilate (27:11) (and Judas [26:25]).

Jesus had taught, "Do not resist an evildoer" (5:38–39). When he was arrested by force, he rebuked the one who "resisted," saying, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (26:52). He had taught, "if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also" (5:39); on the day of Jesus' death the governor's soldiers mocked him by placing a reed in his right hand, as though a royal scepter, then took the reed and struck him on the head (27:29–30). Jesus' teaching on righteousness included, "if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well" (5:40); the governor's soldiers stripped him twice, first of his clothes and then of the scarlet robe they put on him to mock him (27:28, 31). "And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile," Jesus taught his disciples (5:41). Jesus' last steps were being compelled to walk to his own crucifixion, along with Simon from Cyrene, who was compelled by the soldiers to carry Jesus' cross (27:31–32).

"Whenever you pray," Jesus had taught his disciples, "pray to your father who is in secret" (6:6). In Gethsemane, Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray. . . . And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed . . ." (26:36, 39). "Pray then in this way: Our Father. . . . Your will be done," he had taught (6:9). In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, "My



Father, . . . yet not what I want but what you want," and "My Father, . . . your will be done" (26:39, 42). He had taught his disciples to pray, "And do not bring us into the time of trial" (6:13); in Gethsemane, he reminded them again to "pray that you may not come into the time of trial" (26:41).

Thus Jesus "fulfilled all righteousness" by first teaching on the righteousness of God and then by enacting his own teachings on righteousness in his passion.

This is Jesus, the king of the Jews

Echoes resound between Matthew's birth narrative and passion narrative, especially regarding Jesus' identity and role among Jews and Gentiles. In the birth narrative he is presented as the Davidic ruler, or messianic king (1:1, 6, 16–18, 20; 2:4). The Gentile magi called him the "king of the Jews" (2:2). During Jesus' trial the Gentile governor, Pilate, asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (27:11). Soldiers mocked him,

[11] John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 44.

saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" (27:29), and the crime with which he was charged read, in public view, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (27:37).

Echoes resound between Matthew's birth narrative and passion narrative.

The most Jewish of the gospels also has some of the strongest anti-Jewish rhetoric of all the gospels. It was the Jewish King Herod who first sought Jesus' demise, foreshadowing the Jewish religious leaders' determination to see him killed. The complicity of the people of Jerusalem with the evil intent of their leaders is presented in both the birth narrative and the passion narrative ("Herod . . . was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him" [2:3]; "Let him be crucified. . . . His blood be on us and on our children!" [27:22–23, 25])

In both the birth and passion narratives people were given warnings or directions in dreams. Joseph had dreams directing him to take Mary as his wife (1:20), flee to Egypt with Mary and the child Jesus (2:13), return from Egypt upon Herod's death (2:19), and settle in Galilee rather than Judea, which was being ruled by Herod's son Archelaus (2:22). The Gentile wise men were warned in a dream not to return to Herod (2:12). When Jesus was on trial before Pilate, another Gentile, Pilate's wife, had a dream that caused her to give Pilate warning that Jesus was innocent (27:19).

The story of the magi approaching Jesus with their gifts (2:7–12) is embedded in the account of Herod's murderous scheming (2:1–6, 16–18). In similar fashion, sandwiched between two installments of the priests' plotting against Jesus (26:3–5, 14–16) and contrasting sharply with it is the story of the nameless woman's act of costly devotion (26:6–13).[12] Only she recognizes him for who he is and sees what is happening for what it is, giving him an anointing fit for a king to prepare him for burial. (And sadly, as Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has pointed out, the patriarchal church has not in fact told what she has done "in remembrance of her"; while seemingly incidental names such as Simon the leper's have been preserved, like so many women in Scripture, she remains nameless).[13]

Indeed, the identity of the king of the Jews seems to be for the most part most fully disclosed among the Gentiles. Gentile magi came and worshipped him while Herod plotted his murder and "all Jerusalem" was frightened with him. The chief priests and scribes of the people pointed out to Herod that Bethlehem was to be the birthplace of the Messiah (2:4–6), but they themselves did not go there to worship him. On the last day of Jesus' life, "all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together about Jesus in order to bring about his death" (27:1), and the (Gentile) centurion and those who were with him, upon witnessing the death of Jesus, "said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'" (27:54)

The growing tension throughout Matthew between Jesus and the religious leaders culminated in Israel's rejection of God's Son, the Messiah. The risen Lord com-

[12] Robert H. Smith, *Matthew* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 301.

[13] Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1990).

mands his disciples at the end of Matthew's Gospel to "make disciples of all nations" (28:19). Gentiles and Jews alike are thus objects of the church's mission for the post-resurrection Matthean community.[14]

For with the judgment you make you will be judged

Jesus teaches on judging and on the Judgment throughout Matthew. While his disciples are instructed not to judge, that they may not be judged (7:1), Jesus speaks several times of the coming day of judgment (10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36, 41–42; 19:28). He ended his teachings in this gospel with a scene describing the judgment of the nations (25:31–46), with the Son of Man sitting on his throne in glory.

This judgment scene is immediately followed by the passion narrative, in which first the high priest, scribes, and elders sit in judgment on Jesus, then the Roman governor Pilate sits in judgment on Jesus (26:57–68; 27:1–2, 11–26). The reader is first struck with the deep irony of the religious leaders judging the Judge of the world—and then charging him with blasphemy. Writing after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, Matthew has witnessed, first, the judgment of the religious leaders and nation of Israel, and second, the beginning of the judgment of all nations according to righteousness (through the benefit of the obedience of God's Son to the death being shared among the Gentiles as well as the Jews).

When Jesus described for his disciples the beginning of the end of the age, earthquakes would be one of the signs of the beginning of the end (24:7). Upon the death of Jesus, there was an earthquake (27:54). The alert reader knows now that with the death of Jesus, the Day of Judgment is at hand. The Day of Judgment is signaled once again with Jesus' resurrection (28:2).

Thus, for all the talk of righteousness and judgment in Matthew, the final judgment, the final righteousness is the obedient Son of God's self-giving death, and God raising him from the dead. This connection between judgment, righteousness, and Jesus' death and resurrection is what finally keeps a theology of works-righteousness from defining this gospel. While Matthew's theology is indeed far different from Paul's, Matthew's final word of justification is not one of works-righteousness inconsistent with Paul's message of grace through faith. However, it is important to hear Matthew's theology of judgment, and the righteousness of the obedient Son of God, on its own terms, without forcing it to match the Pauline theology of justification by grace. As I will show, in the end Matthew's theology of works-righteousness is overshadowed by the stronger theology of forgiveness of sins through the righteousness of God's beloved Son.

This is my blood of the covenant (or testament)

The motif of the blood of Jesus "weaves its way as a bright red thread through the Matthean passion account, riveting readers' attention on the question of responsibility of the death of Jesus but at the same time enabling readers to probe the deeper layers of the event's meaning."[15] As Jesus shared the Passover cup with his disciples (26:27), he made it clear that this was a death he accepted from his Father's hand (26:39). "The irony is thick here. The death of Jesus —precisely because it is the shedding of

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[14] Professor Edgar Krentz, class lecture, "The Gospel Tradition," Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Spring 1993.

[15] Carroll and Green, *The Death of Jesus*, 39.

innocent, sacrificial blood, creates the possibility of forgiveness even for persons who bear responsibility for putting him to death."[16]

Poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins

When Jesus asserted that one of the twelve would betray him, Judas asked, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" and Jesus responded, σὺ εἶπας, "You have said so"; thus, while tacitly affirming the question, returning to Judas the burden of accepting the truth spoken. In Matthew's Gospel, Judas is not then dismissed but may be assumed to remain for Passover even after this disclosure, thus creating the possibility of forgiveness even for his betrayal of Jesus. Thus Jesus fulfills his teaching, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (5:44).

Sharing in this Passover meal also redefines the disciples, who would all fail Jesus. Judas failed him through his betrayal, Peter through denying him (26:69), and all failed Jesus by fleeing upon Jesus' arrest (26:56). In the Passover, the disciples were the first to receive Jesus' blood, "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (26:28). Thus they were given the identity of forgiven people, who were to form inclusive communities of forgiveness (chapter 18, and 28:16–20). This would be the final meaning of discipleship in the Gospel of Matthew.

Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith

Throughout the gospel, Jesus refers to the disciples' "little faith" (6:30, 8:26, 14:31, 16:8, 17:20). By contrast,

> Matthew's narrative mentions two persons of "great faith"—a centurion (8:10), and a Canaanite woman (15:28)—but Jesus does not call either of these to become his disciples or commission them for ministry as his followers in the world. His disciples are, definitely, people of little faith. . . . For Matthew, then, the church is to be composed of people whom Jesus has saved from their sins (1:21), specifically by shedding his blood for the forgiveness of their sins (26:28).[17]

Jesus' characterization of the disciples as people of little faith is not as insulting or hopeless as it may at first sound, for Jesus affirms that only the tiniest amount of faith is needed (17:20). The disciples are thus affirmed to have *some* faith, rather than none at all (cf. Mark 4:40), and have only begun to experience the implications of the gospel at a basic level.[18]

Matthew portrays some women as being exemplars of faith, including the woman healed of a hemorrhage (9:22) and the Canaanite woman who asked for healing for her daughter (15:28). In Matthew's passion narrative, only women remain faithful to Jesus and his purposes during the last two days of his life: the unnamed woman who anointed him at Bethany (26:6–13) and the "many women" who witnessed his death "from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee" (27:55–56). Some of these women were given the honor and responsibility of witnessing the resurrection events, then being commanded by the risen Jesus to "go and tell" (28:1–2, 10).

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[16] Carroll and Green, 48.

[17] Powell, *Fortress Introduction to The Gospels*, 81–82.

[18] Powell, 82.

And in his name the Gentiles will hope

Through Matthew's use of the Old Testament to interpret Jesus' life, ministry and passion; through his showing that the righteousness of God is the obedience of God's Son, which is the true fulfillment of the law and the prophets; through showing that the sacrificial death of Jesus and shedding his innocent blood was for the forgiveness of sins; and through showing how Israel's rejection of God's Messiah opened the kingdom of heaven to all nations, Matthew's Gospel indeed shows that Jesus, the hope of Israel, is the savior of the nations. Being his disciple means participating in a community defined by his death for the forgiveness of sins.

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Evangelical Challenges Facing Indigenous African Christians

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Several years ago, as part of a group of North American Lutheran college professors, I spent six weeks studying and visiting in Tanzania and Nigeria. My interest was in the present status of evangelical Christianity, that is, Christianity that was brought to Africa by European and American missionaries. Interestingly, since the ending of colonialism, evangelical Christianity has undergone extensive "Africanization."

I examine here the dual directions in which evangelical Christian movements are both growing and facing opposition. African leaders are split between those who see Western Christendom's presence in Africa as imperialistic and those who are willing to accommodate these external elements into the fabric of African religious and cultural life. I discuss and analyze these conflicting trends within the particular context of indigenous Christianity in Nigeria.

Earlier European and American missionaries brought a very Eurocentric Christianity to Africa, which required African converts to give up traditional African culture. The doctrines, rituals, liturgies, and music were European and American. African culture was presented as inferior to Western culture. According to Ronald J. Allen, a professor at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, the situation caused a cultural schizophrenia to develop in which many Africans were Christians on Sunday but adhered to traditional religions clandestinely during the week. Many others became Christians for pragmatic and practical reasons, such as educational and health benefits.[1]

The situation of the past has caused a contemporary dilemma to develop that requires an answer. For Allen the question is: Can Christianity and traditional African religions be synthesized? Since traditional religions are so much a part of African family life and culture, can they be assimilated?

Wilbert R. Shenk, a renowned Mennonite missiologist, has provided a good historical and political analysis of African Christianity. He has contended that the nineteenth-century missionary movement, which extended into Africa, was actually a "novelty." It began with the forming of missionary societies by British Methodists in 1787 and Baptists in 1792. These Protestant societies' emphases were based on lay voluntarism, and by the end of the century a number of new missionary societies had been organized.[2]

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[1] Ronald J. Allen, "Creating an Indigenous African Church," *The Christian Century* (March 6,1991), 266–67.

[2] Wilbert R. Shenk, "The 'Great Century' Reconsidered," in *Anabaptism and Mission*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Scotsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984), 165.

Shenk noted that nineteenth-century missionary leaders like Rufus Anderson, "the foremost" American missionary leader of the century, believed that an indigenous church had to be led by indigenous pastors. This belief became the chief cornerstone for the foundation of indigenous churches wherever missions went. Simultaneously, according to Shenk, this principle actually led to the ending of "Christendom," because it set churches free to find suitable political and cultural indigenous contexts.

Henry Venn, another nineteenth-century American, also saw the interracial tension that would later plague mission leaders. Venn saw "nominal" Christianity as a problem, believing indigenous Christianity led to a "diluted form of conversion in Africa and other places." Yet, in spite of the high standards demanded by the missionaries in Africa, he believed the same standards were not maintained in the countries from which the missionaries had come. Instead, missionaries wanted a disciplined believers' church in Asia and Africa, while the church at home was conformed to indigenous culture. The situation led to a double standard, in which missionaries became the arbiters of right and wrong in all ethical matters in a foreign culture.

In the meantime, according to Shenk, the Keswick movement, a group of volunteer missionaries, took over the Anglican Church Missionary Niger Mission in 1890, accusing Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, an elderly Nigerian, of incompetence. This led to the takeover of other missions by white missionaries and the further alienation of other Nigerian ministers. During the "Great Century" (the attempt to spread Christianity worldwide from 1800 to the start of World War I in 1914), the missionary movement pioneered in creating educational, medical, and social service systems in many countries. Missionaries had a plan to develop Africa in general by preparing a middle class, which would provide leadership. But they also developed the idea that in order to be Christianized people first had to be civilized. Missionaries during "the Great Century" believed in the Three Cs of Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization. They also believed that it was necessary for Asians and Africans to take on Western ways.

According to Samuel A. Adewale, a University of Ibadan scholar, from 1842 to 1888 all Christian churches in Nigeria were mission churches, under the control and supervision of white missionaries, and affiliated with the Anglican Church Missionary Society. When Edward W. Blyden, an early pioneer black nationalist, came to Lagos, Nigeria, he addressed the need for the founding of an indigenous West African church and called for an end to foreign denominationalism and white missionary policies. He also called for the use of African cultural elements in worship in order to make Christianity more meaningful to Africans.[3] In 1890 the United Native African Church was founded by Mojola Agbebi (formerly named David Brown Vincent),[4] who, acting on Blyden's proposal, encouraged African Christians to emulate the independent black church movement in the United States. A friend of Blyden, Agbebi attempted to establish an African church without foreign influences. Although of Baptist background, Agbebi started a church that was ecumenical and nondenominational in scope. It incorporated African Anglicans, Methodists, and Baptists and adhered

[3] S. A. Adewale, *The African Church Inc., 1901–1986* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Oluseyi, 1988), 9–15.

[4] J. A. Atanda, *Baptist Churches in Nigeria, 1850–1950* (Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press Limited, 1988), 13.

to the belief that denominationalism destroyed African unity. The church also refrained from using wine in the sacraments, refused to accept British territorial boundaries, and taught that conversion to Christianity was no reason to give up polygamy.[5] But the United Native African Church soon failed because of financial problems and the fear of excommunication by white missionaries of African clergy. However, Agbebi is credited with being the first president of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, a mainline Christian denomination,[6] and served as a missionary for the all-black National Baptist Convention of the U.S.A.[7]

However, according to Walter L. Williams, a historian of the African American missionary movement, the demotion of Bishop Crowther, the only African with that rank, also caused traditional African leaders to unite with African Christians in order to force out all white missionaries. The circumstances provided the impetus for Edward Blyden's visit from nearby Liberia, urging Nigerians to withdraw from European missions, establishing an independent church similar to African American churches.

While visiting the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, I met Professor Samuel A. Adewale, who also is a vicar of the African Church, Inc. An indigenous church founded in 1901, this church was one of the first in Nigeria to break away from mainline and colonial Christianity. Unlike churches founded by white missionaries, worship services were accompanied by dancing and drumming, and the church attracted a large number of traditional chiefs and rulers because of the acceptance of polygamy. According to Adewale, the acceptance of polygamy enabled the African Church to compete with Islam, which accepts polygamy. Likewise, some members of the African Church held membership simultaneously in traditionalist and Islamic religious organizations.

According to Professor Adewale, today indigenous African churches have more followers than mainline churches do. They have adapted Christianity to African culture and thus are able to make Christianity more attractive to native people. He stated that Christianity would not make the impact that it is making without indigenous African churches. These churches are a form of protest, culturally, politically, and religiously. According to Adewale, white missionaries were extremely high-handed. There are now approximately 5,000 different churches in black Africa that are independent or indigenous. Some are located in Islamic North Africa and are believed to have a membership numbering in the millions. Some of the most prominent indigenous African churches are the Aladura Church in Nigeria, the Cherubim and Seraphim in Nigeria, and the Zionist churches of South Africa.

A major contributing factor for the growth in indigenous churches has been the scriptures. According to Robert E. Hood, the translation of scriptures into tribal languages has had an impact upon "literacy, self-esteem and religious self-determinism." Hood has compared this successful effort to the translation of the Latin Bible into European languages during the Middle Ages. It

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[5] St. Clair Drake, *The Redemption of Africa and Black Religion* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1975), 71–73; Walter L. Williams, *Black Americans and the Evangelization of Africa, 1877–1900* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 72–73.

[6] Adewale, *The African Church*, 15–16; Williams, *Black Americans*, 72–73.

[7] William J. Harvey III, *Bridges of Faith Across the Seas* (Philadelphia: The Foreign Mission Board National Baptist Convention, 1989), 39; Williams, *Black Americans*, 72–73.

is comparable to Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into the common vernacular of Germany in 1616. It has made the scriptures available to the masses of people.[8]

At Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria, Professor J. A. Ilori stated that another problem contributing to the rise of indigenous churches was the attempt to exist without a theology. A Yoruba and a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Seminary in Texas, Ilori said that the initial missionaries who came to Nigeria were not theologians. Many missionaries had little formal education themselves, and most Nigerian helpers were "illiterate or had only little formal education." Their concerns were practical ones, dealing with "evangelism, education and medical care." This meant that Nigerian Christianity from the beginning was not prepared to deal with traditional religions or modern changes occurring in Nigeria.[9]

For Ilori, an underlying cause for the rise in indigenous churches is the peripheral effect evangelical Christians have had upon African religiosity. Africans are primarily religious beings in daily life who cannot exist without religion. Evangelical-missionary Christianity for many Nigerians was simply a set of rules, promises to be expected in the next world, rhythmless hymns, rituals to be followed, and a few other outward things. For Ilori, such Christianity lasts for only two hours on Sundays and once during the week. It is confined to a building, with the remainder of the week empty. Nigerians are not used to this kind of religious vacuum.

Unlike the earlier African indigenous church movement mentioned above, the current indigenous movement is being led by theologians and church leaders who are members of mainline African evangelical denominations and mission churches. These are the former churches of the white



colonialists. For example, in a recent essay entitled "A Time for an African Lutheran Theology," Ambrose M. Moyo has argued that Lutheranism needs to be Africanized. A Lutheran pastor and professor of theology at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare, Moyo stated that many African Christians are former traditionalists, and for them religion is a holistic experience. In Africa God is not an abstract speculation but a concrete being and involved in daily life. Like Ilori in Nigeria, Moyo said that African Christianity is not divided into secular and sacred experiences. Instead God is creator and sustainer of the universe. who is known by many names and involved in daily experiences. Likewise, in black Africa "the rejection of one's family religious practice can only lead to a crisis of identity . . . since identity can only be expressed through relationships in the community of the living and

[8] Robert E. Hood, *Must God Remain Greek? Afro-Cultures & God-Talk* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 13–14.

[9] J. A. Ilori, Christianity in Nigeria: Its Identity and Mission. Lecture at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, July 23, 1990.

To be sure, not all African Christians are in accord with the Africanization movement.

living-dead, and through them with the Supreme Being."[10]

For Moyo the African "living-dead" are similar to Christian saints. They are like those Hebrew ancestors who make up the cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 12. In other words, the ancestors in African thought are comparable to All Saints' Day in the Lutheran Church or Founders' Day in a number of American educational circles. For Moyo, this is simply a way to honor mother and father, which is done by Westerners in memorials to the dead and graveyard rites. In African Christianity, the "living-dead" communicate through divine mediums.

For Africans, the idea of revelation through a book, the Bible, is foreign, and the Holy Spirit is extremely important. Nor is marriage an individual commitment. Instead it is a "corporate alliance" with the community since the wife is fully incorporated into the husband's family. If the husband dies, the marriage continues through "levirate marriage" with the dead husband's brother, her brother-in-law. This marriage continues to provide security for the wife and children. If the first marriage has not produced children, perhaps a second marriage will. The missionaries had condemned levirate marriage and polygamy, but both are found in the Old Testament (in Genesis and Ruth). For Professor Moyo the Lutheran Church in Africa needs to seek African cultural solutions to African problems.

To be sure, not all African Christians are in accord with the Africanization movement, especially on the issue of polygamy. In Ibadan, Nigeria, I met with Dr. Samuel Ola Akande, general secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Akande painfully confirmed the story of John Laoye that Ilori had told me privately. Another Yoruba and Southern Seminary graduate and former Simmons Bible College professor, Laoye had been forced to resign his teaching position at the Nigerian Baptist Seminary after taking a second wife. Although polygamy is still alive and well in Nigeria, it was not accepted by the officials of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.[11]

Dr. Kehinde O. Anifowoshe, director of adult education for the Nigerian Baptist Convention, admonished Americans not to laugh at polygamy, because he believed many Americans themselves practice serial polygamy. They have many wives, if only one at a time.

While at the Ahmadu Bello University, I also met Bishop David L. Windibiziri of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, who held a point of view similar to Akande's. Windibiziri was reared as a traditionalist and educated at Luther Northwestern Semi-

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[10] *Theology and the Black Experience: The Lutheran Heritage Interpreted by African and African-American Theologians*, ed. Albert Pero and Ambrose Moyo (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 82.

[11] Interview with Dr. Samuel Ola Akande and Dr. Kehinde O. Anifowoshe, Ibadan, Nigeria, July 31, 1990. At the time, Akande also was general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance and regional secretary for the All Africa Baptist Fellowship.

nary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Like Akande, the bishop saw two major threats to mainline evangelical Christianity in Nigeria: Islam and the rapid rise of indigenous or independent Christianity. The Muslims were especially dominant among the Hausa people in the North, located in the bishop's area. During the colonial period, they had rejected missionary education. Instead they founded Koranic schools staffed by teachers called mallums, who begged for a living by day and taught Islam for a small fee at night. Islam also was spread by holy war, under the leadership of Usman Dan Fodio in 1804. The Hausa, in particular, were unable to separate Islam from their culture. And there were problems of Muslim fanaticism, especially in northern Nigeria, causing tension between Muslims and Christians. A Christian chapel had been burned down at Ahmadu Bello University. Muslim students spoke of the need for another jihaad. Most Christian professors, including Ilori, labored under the threat of arrest by the military.

Equally problematic for evangelical African Christianity was the mushrooming of indigenous or independent Christian churches. Windibiziri saw their roots in Pentecostalism: gifts of speaking in tongues, faith healing, laying on of hands, and emphasis on the Holy Spirit. This kind of worship experience was more lively than the more solemn Lutheran ones. But the lack of understanding among the elderly and less educated was problematic. According to Windibiziri, the elderly were in positions of leadership in the church, and they were threatened when young people brought new ideas of this nature.

According to one report, the fastest growing Christian bodies in modern Africa are indigenous or independent churches. The growth seems to be a logical development after the coming of independence. If Christianity is to survive and flourish in Africa, as in other places, it is necessary for it to become indigenous.

With indigenous religions in mind, Shenk has stated that nationalism was on the rise at the end of the nineteenth century in Asia and Africa. Yet mission scholars like Marshall Horton wrote that the goal of Christian world mission was the creation of a world Christian civilization, while the "rising expectations" of indigenous non-Western peoples, especially from the late 1800s onward, were for freedom to restore Islam and Hinduism and not to continue under the influence of a "hated foreign" Christianity. This "right" of private conscience and freedom for individuals had been taught in mission schools and small European universities. In short, the missionary movement has always been a double-edged sword.[12]

Osadolor Imasogie, a leading scholar in the field of indigenous African theology, brings some sobering thoughts to this discussion of indigenous versus evangelical African Christianity. He says that both European and American theologians failed to consider seriously the cultural milieu related to African Christianity. Instead, theology was presented to Africans as though it were closed instead of open-ended. Most missionaries had lacked a dynamic understanding of theology and were insensitive to any understanding of an African world view and the role of culture. According to Imasogie, the failure of the situation has led to a veneer of Christian understanding on the part of even the best African Christians, and Christianity for many Africans has remained a foreign religion. Nor have "many Africans . . . accepted Christianity completely as the all-sufficient religion that

[12] Shenk, "The 'Great Century' Reconsidered," 172–73.

meets all human needs." For Imasogie, then, it is a "fact that in 'times of existential crisis' many respectable African Christians have reverted to traditional religious practice as the means for meeting their spiritual needs."[13]

The worldview of the missionaries who brought the gospel and that of the African were extremely different.

With Imasogie's position in mind, it makes little difference whether the African Christian is a member of a mainline evangelical Christian denomination, an independent indigenous church, or a traditionalist one; the results are the same. This is the primary reason that the indigenization or Africanization process is gaining impetus in mainline and former mission churches in Africa. According to Imasogie, Africans will not come to a valid understanding of Christ until Christ is presented from within their worldviews. Otherwise, Christ is regarded as a "stranger-god" who does not know how to handle those crises with which the white man is not familiar. Imasogie's thesis is that Christianity is the universal religion, which only becomes an authentic religion for a particular people when their worldview and self-understanding with that worldview are taken seriously as they are confronted with the claims of Christ.

According to Imasogie, when European Christianity entered black Africa around the mid-1800s, the message was quite weak because of the influence of the Enlightenment. As a result, missionaries, who were great-grandchildren of the Enlightenment, were quasi-scientific in worldview and did not consider the Bible as literally true. On the other hand, like Europeans of the earlier Middle Ages, Africans have a profound belief that spirits, wizards, and devils are at work in the universe. And they have come to believe the Bible to be literally a book of revelation, whereas for the missionaries nature was their open book of revelation. Although the missionary movement of the mid-nineteenth century was led by people deemed as religiously conservative, biblical literalists, to the African their worldview seemed extremely liberal. It was only a veneer of the biblical worldview. The worldview of the missionaries who brought the gospel and that of the African were extremely different, since only lip service was paid to traditional Christian perceptions of the spiritual reality. Such a dynamic orientation to spiritual reality had been radically diluted and replaced with only hollow cliches that lacked the conviction of the former days.

For Imasogie, typical elements in an African worldview and religion would include: (1) an appreciation of Christ's power over evil spiritual forces; (2) a new emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit and the present mediatory efficacy of the Living Christ; and (3) a new emphasis on the omnipresence of God and the consequent sacramental nature of the universe.

The worldwide missionary movement has been a struggle between the missionaries' attempt to spread worldwide Christianity and Western civilization and indigenous

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[13] Osadolor Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (Ibadan: African Christian Press, 1993), 2nd ed., 23.

peoples' attempt to make the alien religion of Christianity indigenous. Although Blyden, an earlier Black Nationalist Presbyterian missionary, advocated the acceptance of African cultural elements, and Islam as a valid religious expression, he favored British culture. Islam adhered to the belief in monotheism but accepted polygamy, which was deeply rooted in African culture.[14] Therefore, he believed it was moving in the direction of Christianity. In an effort to make his point, Blyden allegedly lived a polygamous lifestyle. However, according to Kwame Anthony Appiah, a Harvard philosopher of African culture and part Asante, Blyden viewed Western culture as superior.

At that time, most African American missionaries were to the right of Blyden. They adhered to a loose nationalist movement known as Ethiopianism, which was based on the words of Psalm 68:31, "Princes shall come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God."[15] But they also believed in the doctrine of providential design, teaching that Anglo-Saxon civilization and Christianity were the best in the world. Moreover, in his providence God allowed Africans to be captured and enslaved in order to be taught this superior religion and civilization and then returned to Africa as civilizing missionaries.[16]

Evangelical Christianity, Africanization, and indigenization are being played out, with the move toward indigenization gaining the lead. If Imasogie's analysis of Africa's indigenous theology is accepted, the gap between indigenous and evangelical Christianity will disappear, with the indigenization process taking place in former mission churches as well, in an effort to create a genuine African Christianity that will hold up during "existential crisis."

At the more practical level, there is still opposition to this indigenization process among African Christians. Even in Imasogie's own Baptist school, there was resistance, as in the case of the Laoye incident. In spite of the indigenization movement led by such Lutheran theologians as Moyo in Zimbabwe, there are Lutheran pastors like Bishop Windibiziri in Northern Nigeria who are in opposition. Contemporary African Christianity is uniting in "stretching its hands unto God," but all stones and obstacles are not rolled away!

We are left with Shenk's argument: churches "founded" by missionaries were influenced by a "complex combination of political, religious, and social drives," which created a "new genre of church, combining indigenous elements of ethos . . . with what has been learned from the Western church." It will be interesting to see how this church develops in the twenty-first century.

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[14] Williams, 115–17; Moses N. Moore Jr., "Edward Wilmot Blyden: From Old School Presbyterian Missionary to Minister of Truth," *Journal of Presbyterian History* (Summer 1997), 106–11.

[15] Williams, 115–17; Wilson J. Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 23–34; Drake, *The Redemption of Africa,* 50–53; Kwane Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 21–22.

[16] Drake, *The Redemption of Africa,* 50–53.

Two Biblical Models for Relating to the Ethnic and Religious Other

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The sword-fire-hammer model

While recently preparing for a chapel sermon at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago I was struck by the vivid and forceful way in which Jesus challenged and critiqued one biblical model for relating to the ethnic and religious other. These thoughts were triggered by the biblical texts for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany: Deut 18:15–20, 1 Cor 8:1–3, and Mk 1:21–28.

In Mark 1, Jesus is recognized as one who speaks with authority and not as the traditional scribe who quotes scripture and tradition. In Deuteronomy 18, the Deuteronomist's version of Moses announces that when the people of Israel enter their promised land, God will not forget them but raise up for them a prophet like Moses himself, who will speak God's word to them in their new homeland. The New Testament reports that Jesus speaking with authority was seen by some of his contemporaries as the prophet promised by Deuteronomy's Moses. The Gospel of Matthew understands Jesus as the new Moses who declares God's will for a new community. Even as the old Moses had delivered the five books of the Pentateuch to ancient Israel, the new Moses preaches five sermons to the new Israel (Matthew 5–7, 10, 13, 18, 23–25). The Gospel of John writes that after the feeding of the 5,000, some of the crowd were conjecturing that Jesus was "the prophet" like Moses, for he had fed them, like Moses, with bread in the wilderness (John 6:14). What is striking in comparing the new Moses to the Moses of Deuteronomy is the absolute contrast in their understanding of relating to the ethnic and religious other.

Deuteronomy develops a beautiful vision of God's covenant relationship with the chosen people. God has chosen them not because they are numerous and significant, for in fact they are the smallest of peoples (Deut 7:7). Furthermore, they are not a righteous people but rather a disobedient and stubborn people. God out of sheer grace has elected this people and wills that they have a good and full life in the new land that God will give them. Even the widows, orphans, and aliens will be protected by God through God's people (Deut 10:18–19). God promises to be faithful to his covenant, and in return the community is to place God at the center of its life. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deut 6:45).

As Deuteronomy describes its new world, Moses warns that Israel will be sur-

rounded by the ethnic and religious other. The other will be a threat to the religious identity and the purity of the chosen Israel. If the danger of religious pollution begins to materialize, the other must be systematically annihilated. "You shall devour all the people that the Lord your God is turning over to you, *showing no pity* (Deut 7:16). In Deuteronomy 13 it is announced that in a situation of threatened religious pollution all human life—all men, women weeping and seeking to protect their children, and screaming infants—are to be slaughtered along with all the cattle. All of this polluted life is to be heaped up in a gigantic mound of bloody flesh, set on fire and burned as a whole burnt offering unto God (Deut 13:15–16). This may be described as the sword-and-flames model of relating to the ethnic and religious other.

This model is found reflected in other texts of the Hebrew Scriptures, and it becomes fully embodied in the Maccabean Revolt. In 198 B.C. the Judean people came under the oppressive tyranny of a Hellenistic Empire under the Seleucids. In approximately 168 B.C. the despotic ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes, robbed the temple in Jerusalem of its silver and gold and desecrated the altar of God with sacrifices of swine. Circumcision was criminalized, and sacred scriptures were burned. In opposing this onslaught of religious pollution a family of priests fathered by Mattathias carried on a guerilla war to cleanse the pollution from Judea. Judas Maccabeus, eldest son of Mattathias, designated The Hammer, led the military revolt and cleansed the temple of its religious pollution. In 164 B.C. Judas lit the eternal light that had been snuffed out within the temple. The Jewish community continues to this day to celebrate this event as the Feast of Lights, Hanukkah. After his death in battle Judas was succeeded by his brothers Jonathan and Simon. Simon established a Jewish state and was killed in 142 B.C. In this Maccabean struggle the Judean military raided and destroyed a number of cities putting all males to death by the edge of the sword (as an example see I Maccabees 5). Perhaps we can now designate this as the sword, flames, and hammer model for relating to the ethnic and religious other.

This Deuteronomist-Maccabean model was alive in Jesus' day. Hellenistic and Roman culture was present around and within the Judean world. The pollution of the identity and purity of Israel was feared by countless Jews. The Pharisees attempted to carefully regulate every facet of life in order to maintain the purity or holiness of the religious community. The Sadducees were willing to risk some accommodation with the Roman pagan presence if they could control the primary religious-liturgical institution, the temple. The Zealots still advocated the sword-flames-hammer model and would lead a disastrous military revolt against Rome just thirty-five years after Jesus death. The Essenes waited for the final War of God. As they waited they prepared banners to be used in the conflict declaring: "The War of God, The Vengeance of God, the Recompense of God, the Annihilation of God of all Vain Nations" (from the Dead Sea Scroll named "The War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness"). Many Judeans were inspired by the sword-flames-hammer model, and the Jewish historian Josephus reports a number of revolts in the times of Jesus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book xviii, Chap. 1). Even some Pharisees were caught up in this spirit. During the second great Judean revolt of 132–135 A.D. a Judean rebel named Bar Kochba claimed to be the promised Messiah. As he fought to remove the pollution of Rome from the promised land, the leading Judean Rabbi Akiba recognized Bar Kochba's Messianic claim.

The Jonah-Ruth-Jesus model, or the nonviolent, love-your-enemy model

Within this context Jesus, the one who spoke with the authority of the new Moses, directly and powerfully challenged the sword-fire-hammer model. Jesus' challenge to the Moses of Deuteronomy was not new within the traditions of the ancient Hebrew Scriptures. The Book of Jonah powerfully articulated that debate. According to the Book of Jonah the sword and fire are not God's final will for the ethnic and religious other. God is enraged by the violence that Nineveh's armies have meted out against the cities and peoples of the Ancient Middle East; however, God's fury was a reality within God's passionate concern for all people including 120,000 Ninevites who did not know their left hand from their right. Interestingly enough God's passionate concern included all the cattle (cf. Deut 13:15) that inhabited the city and countryside (Jonah 4).

Within the Book of Jonah, the prophet Jonah himself embodies the old fire- flames model; however, the Book of Jonah portrays God as rebuking Jonah and his approach to the people of Nineveh. Over the protest of the prophet Jonah, the Book of Jonah announces God's love of the enemy, the ethnic and religious other. Jesus moves within this ancient tradition found in Jonah (one can find the tradition in other passages such as Prov 25:21–22). Jesus roots this vision of Jonah in creation itself. In Matthew 5 Jesus, within this tradition, challenges another rabbinical and biblical tradition. He says, " You have heard it said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy,' but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:43–44). In spite of the biblical scholars who argue that Deuteronomy contains a similar message when it shows concern for the alien or strangers in their midst (Deut 10:18–19), we need to note that the Deuteronomist calls for the annihilation of the ethnic and religious other who threaten to pollute the purity of the faith.

Jesus moves not only in the Jonah tradition but also in the Ruth tradition. Ruth, like Jonah, directly challenges the Deuteronomist vision of Moses. Deuteronomy specifically states that no Moabite may enter the temple for ten generations (Deut 23:13). The Moabites were the ethnic and religious other who had not befriended or aided Israel as they made their journey up the east side of the Jordan on their journey to their promised land. They as enemy were the polluted and polluting and were prohibited from entering the sacred space of God's dwelling.

The Book of Ruth says in direct rejection of Deuteronomy's fear of foreign pollution that a Moabite, Ruth, had proven to be a woman of God. Ruth had been a faithful daughter-in-law to the Israelite Naomi and a faithful wife to the Israelite Mahlon (Ruth 4:9). Ruth determined to return with Naomi to the land of Israel in order to marry a kinsman of Mahlon and Elimelech ("God is King"), who was Naomi's husband and Mahlon's father. According to the ancient traditions of Israel it was a family's duty to ensure that if an adult male died without having a child with his wife, then another male within the family would father a child for the deceased (Deut 25:5–10). Ruth went to Boaz, a kinsman of her husband, and requested that Boaz fulfil the obligation specifically mandated by Deuteronomy. The very one who had been excluded from the sanctuary by Deuteronomy had fulfilled the law of Levirate marriage demanded by Deuteronomy. The Book of Ruth announces that the tradition of exclusion found within the Deuteronomist is rejected by God, because Ruth is a

woman faithful to God. Her son was to stand within the genealogy of the Royal King David (Ruth 4:17–18).

Jesus stands within this Ruth tradition, finding God's presence and good pleasure among those who were feared as the agents of pollution within Jesus' own day. When Jesus tells a parable to reveal life within the reign of God, he on one occasion tells the story of a Samaritan traveler who came to the rescue of another traveler who lay beaten and bloody on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho (Lk 10:25–37). To understand the depth of the story, one must recognize that in Jesus' day Samaritans were considered heretics, religious schismatics (worshipping in Samaria rather than the center of worship chosen by God, Jerusalem, in direct contradiction to the legal tradition found in the Book of Deuteronomy [12:13–28]), and they were of a polluted blood line and gene pool. Samaritans were Israelites whose blood was mixed with the blood of alien peoples from the Tigris-Euphrates river valley. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus, like Ruth, declares that within the so-called polluted nations of the world God has been present and active raising up righteous people. In contrast to the holy, dedicated, and unpolluted priest and Levite who ignored the beaten and bloody traveler (for fear of religious pollution or physical danger), it was the Samaritan who had compassion and came to rescue and care for the broken one on the rocky road. Jesus, like Ruth, finds the agents and doers of God's will among the Gentiles, the unclean and polluting. Jesus noted the widow of Sidon, who was used by God to feed the prophet Elijah; the Syrian military officer healed by Elisha (Lk 4:10–20); the Roman centurion, whose faith was deeper than any other that Jesus had known (Mt 8:5–13), and the Syrophoenecian woman who refused to be denied the blessing of Jesus (Mt 23:13–15).

Jesus' vision of life, love, peace, and hope would not come through the violence of sword, fire, and hammer.

Within this Jonah-Ruth tradition, Jesus totally rejected the sword-fire-hammer model of relating to the other. Deuteronomy 19:20 states, "Show no pity/compassion: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." This same tradition is also found in Exodus and Leviticus. In absolute contrast Jesus says, "you have heard that it was said, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist one who is evil. If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also . . . if any one forces you to go one mile (this is a reference to a Roman soldier's right to ask the conquered to carry military packs for a mile), go with them two" (Mt 5:38–48). Within a society where the sword-and-hammer model was alive, Jesus announced a nonviolent direct-speech-and-action approach to society and the other. Jesus is convinced that violence breeds violence: "The one who takes the sword will die by the sword" (Mt 26:22). Jesus' vision of life, love, peace, and hope would not come through the violence of sword, fire, and hammer. God's visionary messianic world can only be drawn forth from the hearts of humanity by the power of divine love, which will persevere through the power of nonviolent love and through that love draw all of life and the world. "When I am

lifted up I will draw all humanity and all things to myself" (Jn 12:32). The messianic vision must be sought through the Jonah-Ruth-Jesus model or the nonviolent, love-your-enemy model of relating to the other, particularly the ethnic and religious other.

Two models and the church

Since we represent the Lutheran community, it is important to recognize the power of the sword-flames-hammer model within our own tradition. Martin Luther was born in 1483, the same year that Torquemada, the private chaplain of Queen Isabella of Spain, became the Inquisitor General of the Spanish Inquisition. Primary targets of the Inquisition were Jews and Muslims. They were to be harassed and tortured in order to convert them to Christianity or driven from their own homes and countries. Thousands of Jews were tortured on the rack, burned in fire, or killed by the sword. Many renounced, at least publicly, their own faith in order to spare their families and themselves the wrath of Christian fanatics. In 1492 the unconverted Jews and Muslims were driven off the Iberian Peninsula by the forces of King Ferdinand and Isabella. What is even more incredible is the fact that this horrendous act of violence had already been preceded by the expulsion of Jews from France and England. Even this had been preceded by what Abram Leon Sacher (*A History of the Jews* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964]) calls "four bloody centuries" of Christian persecution and slaughter of Jews through western Europe.

Martin Luther, in his early years and after his discovery of salvation through faith by grace, denounced the Spanish and Roman church for their violent attacks against the Jews. In the pamphlet "Jesus was Born a Jew" Luther describes the Jews as the best blood of the earth and the children of God through whom the scriptures were received. They were persons who should be loved and treated with a friendly spirit. Horribly, toward the end of his life, Luther reversed his position, and in another pamphlet, "Concerning the Jews and Their Lies," he, with the demonic sword-fire-hammer clergy of his day, viciously attacked the Jews, accusing them of poisoning wells, murdering Christian children, and being obstinate before Christian revelation. Luther called for the burning of synagogues, destruction of Talmudic literature, confiscation of Jewish wealth, and expulsion of all Jews not willing to accept Jesus Christ.

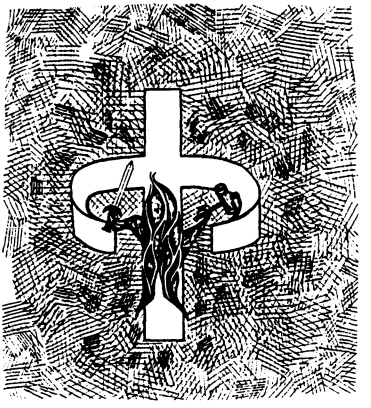
This fanatic spirit within Western Europe and North America did not only focus on the Jewish community but raged at a variety of forms of the ethnic and religious other. This became even more destructive as an imperial West broke out of its traditional home and encircled the globe. We recognize that same demonic spirit alive within ourselves, our churches, and our communities.

The Jonah-Ruth-Jesus model also continues to be a powerful reality. It was embodied in Francis of Assisi as he addressed the Muslim, Suleiman the Magnificent; in George Fox and the Quaker movement in their relationships to the American Indian nations; and in our own time and nation in Martin Luther King Jr. King began his ministry in a Baptist African American congregation in Montgomery, Alabama. His prophetic ministry was called forth by the evil and destructive racism of the southern U.S. He raged inwardly at a society and white race that subjugated and oppressed African Americans in a system of segregation that destroyed their bodies, psyches, and souls. However, as he led protest after protest in Montgomery, Birmingham, Chicago, and Memphis in order to challenge the apartheid system in North America, Dr.

King insisted that the struggle for justice had to be rooted in love for the enemy and in nonviolent direct action.

Like Jonah, Ruth, and Jesus, King was convinced that at the heart of divine love moving toward justice, righteousness, and wholeness (the reign of God) was a radical love that included every other, even the enemy. Like Jonah, Ruth, and Jesus, King was convinced that one would find God's presence, God's work, God's servants and agents within all creation, certainly outside one's own household faith. He found allies within the Christian family of all denominations. He found allies within the Jewish community. He found his primary mentor other than Jesus in an Indian Hindu, M. Gandhi. In Gandhi he found a Hindu whose nonviolent love was not only an ideal but a practical strategy for bringing the British Empire to its knees. Like Gandhi, King's nonviolent love in direct action was both an ideal to be embodied and a practical strategy to be realized in transforming the United States of America. It was a path to be walked in following Jesus, and it was a means whereby hopes were to be realized.

When we live within a tradition it often is easy to overlook the radical dimensions alive within it. A number of years ago I heard Dr. Harold Vogelaar, Professor of Islamic Studies at LSTC, tell of an encounter which he had experienced with a young Muslim artist in Egypt. When visiting with the young Muslim, Vogelaar noticed a painting that portrayed a Muslim man holding a sword in one hand and a dove in the other. Harold asked about the significance of the portrait. The artist replied that the figure represented Islam, which always came with peace in one hand, but if peace was not accepted or rejected there must be a sword to make defense and victory possible. Vogelaar then asked if the artist could paint a figure of a man who carried the dove with



two hands. The artist was silent for a long time and then replied, "In that case I would have to paint a picture of Jesus."

That is the nonviolent love-your-enemy model for relating to the ethnic and religious other. We could call it the holding-dove-with-two-hands model. It often appears to be crushed by hate and violence; it is seemingly subjugated to the sword-flames-hammer reality; but it is still being raised up from death by the Abba and Spirit of Jesus!

Preaching in the Service of God

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Preaching is worship. The sermon is not an alien patch that fills a hole in the worship service. Preaching is woven with the same warp and woof, the same fabric, and is in the same service of God as the worship of the church. In this essay I show how preaching is centered in the gospel and becomes a means of grace when the sermon is woven into the cloth with the worship service.

The word for the corporate worship service in German is *Gottesdienst*. It has a double meaning. First, it means the service of God in the gospel in word and sacraments for the people. Simultaneously, it means the responsive service of the people to God in acts of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Preaching is in the service of God when the sermon is woven with the same warp of God's sacramental action and woof of the people's sacrificial response.

There is an important difference between the sermon and the liturgy in the worship service. The liturgies of the church catholic express in general terms the faith of the whole church in every time and place. The psalms, Scripture readings, collects, responses, canticles, and hymns have been forged together by the community of faith over the centuries. The sermon, however, is one preacher's application of the Word of God in a particular time and place.

The sermon and liturgy support one another in the service of God. The liturgy places the sermon that is a particular application of the Word into the context of the faith of the church. The sermon applies the word and deed of the liturgy to daily life. The liturgy can ensure that the sermon speaks for God and the church. The sermon ensures that the liturgy speaks to real life.

What follows is a description of five ways preaching becomes a means of grace in the service of God when it is fully integrated into the worship service.

1. The rhetoric of worship transforms a mere lecture or story about God into a sermon that directly expresses the service of God.

The rhetoric of worship is the direct address of God in proclamation, and the people's response to God in adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Preaching from the heart of the preacher to the hearts of the people is speech that takes the form of worship.

Consider, for example, a Thanksgiving sermon that is based on the narrative of the Ten Lepers (Luke 17:11–19). The preacher may retell the story, exegete the text, analyze why nine lepers did not return to give thanks, explain how the hearers are twice blessed, as the Samaritan was, in giving thanks. The process of application may require much explaining and story telling, but the sermon does not directly express the service of God until it takes the form of worship.

The goal of a Thanksgiving sermon is

not simply the hearers' growth in understanding about Thanksgiving. The goal is the growth in faith that praises God and a life that is a sacrifice of thanksgiving. The gospel proclaimed as a gift effects such faith. The actual praise of God is the first response of faith. Thus the sermon eventually comes to expression in the rhetoric of worship.

One of the great resources for effecting and expressing thanks is the liturgy itself. The preacher would do well to echo the *Te Deum* or the words of the psalmist (Psalm 103:1–2) in the sermon itself:

> *Bless the Lord, O my soul,*
> *and all that is within me,*
> *bless his holy name.*
>
> *Bless the Lord, O my soul,*
> *and forget not all his benefits.*

2. Preaching in the rhythm of worship makes the gospel the motivating power in the sermon.

Here is the rhythm of worship: God's action in the gospel through word and sacraments brings about the people's response of faith. Preaching attuned to the rhythm of worship would mean the end to all moralistic sermons.

The whole Christian life is lived by breathing in God's grace in Christ and breathing out words and works of faith. As with our normal physical breathing process, this is often done unconsciously. The sermon seeks to breathe the Presence on the hearers in order to effect a more consciously committed response of faith in the home, at work, and in society.

The order of cause and effect is crucial. You can't breathe out unless you are continually breathing in. The process is continuous and interactive, but the source of life is always God's grace. The prayer of the day for Easter V reveals this rhythm dramatically:

> O God, form the minds of your faithful people into a single will. Make us love what you command and desire what you promise, that, amid all the changes of this world, our hearts may be fixed where true joy is found; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

The prayer echoes the thought of James that every good and every perfect gift is from God (James 1:17). God forms our minds into the mind of Christ. God's grace in Christ makes us love and desire the will of God. God's eternal gift fixes our hearts in true joy. The prayer is for the Presence of God to work what only God can work in our lives. Prayer at its best asks God to be in everything; it does not simply ask God for something.

The liturgy not only collects the prayers of the people but also answers these prayers. God is present in the gospel words and sacraments forming the people to be of one mind, making them love to love, and fixing their hearts in true joy.

Preaching as worship is not just about prayer. It *is* prayer. The preacher does not simply tell the hearers that they should pray. The preacher prays for the people when she expresses the real struggles and unspoken pleas to God for help in the sermon. The preacher above all answers the cries for the Presence by presenting God in Christ as present in their struggles.

A sermon on family life is not just an analysis of what is wrong with family life in America today. The preacher speaks as a pastor who has visited the homes of the congregation. She has experienced the struggles of women who want to be good mothers and good employees at the same time. The pleas of teenage sons have been heard, "Accept me as I am, and not as you

expect me to be." The preacher has watched a couple who yearn to stay in love but are drifting apart. All of their pleas are expressed indirectly in the analysis or the story and often are raised directly in the sermon.

Preaching is also the answer to prayer. With passion and a sense of urgency the preacher proclaims the Presence of God's grace in the midst of the hearer's family life. The crucial moment in every sermon is offering the answer to the prayer: "Make us love what you command and desire what you promise. . . ." What will we say about the grandeur, largesse, and beauty of the Promise of God in Christ that will make the members of the family desire this promise and love to love each other? That is the most awesome task in preaching.

3. The preacher speaks for the church and preaches the church when the sermon relates the liturgy of the church to daily life.

The word *liturgy* literally means the work or service of the people. In the course of time the term referred to the services of the Word and the Eucharist. In many churches, the word *liturgy* is equated with Eucharistic Service.

The historic liturgies speak for the church catholic. The liturgical "we" is not simply the collected voices of individuals in a congregation. The lessons, psalms, collects, canticles, responses, and hymns were formed and reformed over millennia by the church. The liturgy is the whole church's expression of the praise of God.

The liturgy is also the ritual sign of the whole Christian life in community. The offering is a symbol of a life of sacrifice and thanksgiving. The ongoing significance of the rite of baptism is dying and rising with Christ to newness of life each day. The sermon makes this connection between liturgy and daily life.

The liturgy can serve as a counterbalance to two dangers in contemporary preaching: the tendency for the preacher to speak only for himself and not for God and the whole church, and the tendency to apply the gospel only to individuals and interpersonal relationships. The preacher does not preach on behalf of the church, a new corporate reality into which the individual is incorporated. I want to discuss briefly these tendencies toward subjectivism and individualism in preaching.

There are some preachers who believe that they speak only for God and never for themselves. The result is that they falsely bind the consciences of the hearers with much of what they say. The truth is that preaching is often a personal confession of faith that is flawed. Every sermon contains personal moral and theological opinions neither commanded by God nor shared by everyone in the church. The preacher must be fully aware when he speaks for himself and is not speaking by divine command or for the church.

However, the tendency in many mainline Protestant churches is to go to the other extreme, where the entire sermon is mired in "It seems to me." The preacher would never presume to speak for anyone else, let alone God. The sermon becomes a personal rumination of the faith offered to the hearer to accept or reject as seems right for him or her. In short, the preacher, out of a fear of being called intolerant or dogmatic, *never* speaks for God or for the people of God.

It is awesome to speak for God. That is why the preacher is so intent on maintaining the integrity of the biblical text. That is why the preacher is so focused on telling the truth—for God is truth. That is why the preacher is so centered in the gospel, for there we behold God's grace and truth. When the truth is told and the gospel is preached, the preacher speaks for God.

To speak for the whole church is a great responsibility. That is why the corporate "we" of the liturgy is so helpful. The liturgy does speak for the church. The whole church has always prayed for God to enable the community to seek social justice. The church can not opt out of caring for the poor, and the preacher is authorized to appeal to the conscience of the whole congregation: "You are to seek justice and show mercy to the poor."

Relating this call to do justice to the present situation, where welfare reform is under debate, is not so simple. Congregations are made up of people of different political parties who may be united in the goal of seeking justice but divided in their strategies to achieve it. The preacher can pose the issues at stake for the whole congregation to consider but does not speak for the church by calling on the congregation to support a particular political platform.

Much contemporary preaching also tends to be individualistic. Sociologists consistently point out that individualism is a trait in the American ethos. We Americans do not take the corporate reality of community seriously enough. In terms of preaching, we preach the gospel to individuals and their personal life and do not preach the church into which individuals are incorporated.

Preachers are called to preach the church. The gospel is not simply the Spirit's power for personal salvation. The gospel is also the power by which the Spirit calls, enlightens, sanctifies, and guards the whole church in the world. The Spirit of the Risen Christ brings a new order of grace and mercy and a new humanity in which all are one. When this gospel is preached, the reality of the church is present.

I want to illustrate what I mean by preaching the church by relating a stewardship sermon to the offering in the liturgy.

The whole Christian life is lived by breathing in God's grace in Christ and breathing out words and works of faith.

We tend to view the offering as a "collection" of individual gifts to meet the budget requirements determined by a democratic process by a particular congregation. Many members in effect say to themselves, "I give what I want to give as long as I see fit to give." "Seeing fit" means as long as the congregation meets my needs, the budget reflects my priorities, and I affirm the pastor's ministry.

This individualistic approach to giving is one factor at work in the provincial way congregational funds are allocated. The wider mission of the church and benevolence to those in need are the last priority and are often given short shrift.

A stewardship sermon can offer a gospel that frees individuals to give freely and with a greater measure of largesse than they could ever have imagined. But this is not the antidote to individualism. The gospel that preaches the church is that antidote.

In many churches, the offering includes the gifts of bread and wine to be used in the Holy Communion. The celebrant will pray that the bread may be the body of Christ and that those who receive it will be the body of Christ in the world. The offering is now integral to being the Risen Christ in the world. The same ministry of forgiveness,

mercy, acceptance, and healing Christ performed on earth is now performed by the church. The questions become, "Does this budget reflect the ministry of Christ for the world? Are we being the church when building a building makes it impossible for us to support the hospitals, social ministry, seminaries, and mission enterprises of the body of Christ in the world today? Are we giving generously with no strings attached to those who need it most?"

Preaching on social issues is not just about freeing individual members for seeking social justice in the community. It involves asking, "How does the church as a new order of grace impact on the old order we call the world?"

4. When the sacraments are preached, preaching becomes sacramental.

The liturgy is often equated with the Eucharist, but that liturgy encompasses the service of the Word. I do not want to enter into a debate that assumes that there is some competition between the service of the Word and the eucharistic service. The word that proclaims God's grace in Christ is the Spirit's means of grace, and that Word is sacramental. The Eucharist is a sacrament that is preached. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you *proclaim* the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26). Our Lord's words are a proclamation of the gospel: "Take and drink; this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins." The action of the congregation in receiving one bread and one cup is a visible proclamation of the new covenant.

The Eucharist can also be proclaimed in the sermon. Preaching the Eucharist is not telling the hearers, "Go to communion more frequently." Preaching the Eucharist is reminding the hearers of what will happen when they encounter the Risen Christ at the Lord's table. Baptism is not preached when the hearers are told, "Remember your baptism." Baptism is preached when the preacher proclaims what God in Christ did and does for the hearers in their baptism.

Preaching the Eucharist can be a powerful way to end a sermon. The past is made present. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus are not the only ones who encounter the Risen Christ and who see Christ in the breaking of bread. The hearers are pointed toward the Emmaus encounter as they come to the table of the Lord.

Preaching the Eucharist also points the hearers to the source for both believing and being the church in the world. The specific goal of the sermon can be concretized by showing how the encounter with Christ will form the congregation into a community of grace and mercy.

In recent years, I began the rite of baptism with a one-minute homily. I joined the theme of the day expressed in the sermon, the action of God in Christ that gives the candidate(s) their identity, and the commitment the congregations makes as the family of God. It was a way for the members of the congregation to overhear the gospel and remember their own baptism. It also was a way to address the candidates personally.

5. When the sermon applies the Sunday celebration of the Paschal mystery to life, preaching is always centered in the gospel.

Every Sunday service is a celebration of the Paschal mystery. The mystery of the Incarnation, the atoning death and victorious resurrection of Christ, is encompassed in the image of the Paschal Lamb. By the end of the second century, the Gentile-Christian community moved the Saturday Sabbath centered in creation (Gen 2:13) and the Exodus (Deut 5:15) to a Sunday celebration centered in the Paschal mystery.

The liturgy throughout the Church Year is immersed in the celebration of the Paschal mystery:

This is the feast of victory for our God.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain,
Whose blood set us free to be people of God. . . . (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, p. 60)

The "Gloria in Excelsis" or Hymn of Praise begins with the Christmas hymn of the angels:

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

The hymn soon moves on to the paschal mystery as any full celebration of Christmas does:

Lord God, Lamb of God:
You take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.
You are seated at the right hand of the Father;
receive our prayer. (*LBW*, p. 59)

Even in the more somber season of Lent, when the "Gloria" and "Alleluias" are omitted, the victory of our Lord over evil is the dominant theme of the lessons. Every Sunday is a celebration of Easter faith.

These are different ways to look at the role of the sermon in a Sunday Service. One is to view it as the preacher's message for the day, largely divorced from the liturgy. A sermon series on the Ten Commandments can easily become moral instruction. The sermon may be viewed as the application of the Gospel lesson of a particular day in the Church Year. The lesson for Epiphany V, Matthew 5:21–27, can easily be separated from the gospel in Matthew and the Paschal mystery. However, when the sermon is viewed as the application of the Paschal mystery, preaching will always be centered in the gospel.

The heart of the gospel is the proclamation of God's deed in raising the crucified Christ from the dead. This is the Paschal mystery celebrated in the Sunday service. The preacher's task becomes applying this mystery to the lives of the hearers.

The liturgy throughout the Church Year is immersed in the celebration of the Paschal mystery.

Preachers would do well to work at integrating the sermon with the worship service. Not only is this a way to unify the service and strengthen the meaning of worship for the congregation, but it is also a way to transform what might have been a moralistic lecture into a means of grace that evokes a lively response of faith from the people.

Psalmic Bishops[1]

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Now that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has voted to adopt the historic episcopate from the Episcopal Church U.S.A. and the Episcopal Church has approved the plans to do so,[2] it remains to be seen if this decision will make for better Lutheran bishops.[3] Theoretically we will not know until new Lutheran bishops have been ordained following Canon IV from the Council of Nicaea, 325 A.D., which calls for three bishops in historic succession to lay their hands on the new bishops in the ordination rite.[4]

Orthodox bishops

But even then we may still not know if there is any help gained by adopting the historic episcopate. This is not because it takes a while for episcopal ordinations to percolate before they get their desired results. No, it is because those ordinations in and of themselves cannot improve the ministry of bishops in the least. Carl E. Braaten explains this key point:

> Neither orthodoxy nor episcopacy alone can deal with the crisis of authority in the church. Orthodoxy without episcopacy is blind; episcopacy without orthodoxy is empty. Put the two together, and we might have a workable model of authority in the church. That was the experience of the early church; it is the lesson we must learn again from church history under the conditions of our struggles to be a church faithful to the gospel.[5]

So if orthodox faith and practices do not accompany episcopal ordinations, the new Lutheran bishops in the ELCA will be no better off than those currently serving

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[1] I am grateful to Carl E. Braaten, Paul Rorem, and Ralph W. Klein for criticisms of earlier drafts of this paper.

[2] See Braaten, "It's the Episcopacy, Stupid!" *Pro Ecclesia* 8 (Fall 1999): 389–90, for an account of this historic decision made by the ELCA on August 19, 1999. And for the Episcopalian ratification of that decision see "Episcopalians Decisively Adopt CCM," *The Lutheran* 13 (August 2000): 40–41.

[3] ELCA bishops, in Braaten's judgment, suffer from having lost "the vitalities of [the] Catholic elements in their foundational charter" (Braaten, *Mother Church: Ecclesiology and Ecumenism* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998], 147). So they look "more like branch managers of a business corporation" than "bishops in either the New Testament or the traditional sense" (Braaten, *The Apostolic Imperative: Nature and Aim of the Church's Mission and Ministry* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985], 156, 152). As such they are little more than "ordained pastors with lots of opportunity to travel" [Braaten, "Lutheran Dilemmas on the Doctrine of Ministry," *Pro Ecclesia* 2 [Summer 1993]: 262).

[4] *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*, ed. Henry R. Percival (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 11. This canon is required in §19 of *Called to Common Mission.*

[5] Braaten, *Mother Church*, 97. On this same page he also declares: "The recovery of an authentic episcopacy . . . is no panacea for the crisis of authority in the church."

without the advantage of episcopal succession.[6] This inadequacy in episcopal ordinations has been amply illustrated in the unorthodox bishopric of John Shelby Spong of New Jersey.[7]

Marc Kolden has two proposals for fostering orthodoxy in light of *Called to Common Mission*.[8] The first is to deemphasize Lutheran bishops altogether by instead encouraging "congregations-in-mission . . . to set the direction for the ELCA." Without this shift we will be hampered by bishops as "CEOs of corporations, 'ruling' large areas on an administrative model rather than a pastor-congregation model." His second idea is to stress paragraph 11 in *CCM*, which says we are "free to maintain that the historic episcopate is not necessary for full communion." His two main ways to do this are:

> We should seek to get language into the ELCA constitution similar to that of the Church of Sweden and the Church of Finland, by which the historic episcopate is set in a clearly subordinate relation to the means of grace. We should insist on allowing for some sort of "conscience clause" for pastors, bishops, and graduating seminarians who, on biblical and confessional grounds, cannot accept the requirement of the historic episcopate. The ELCA needs some way of symbolizing our confessional teaching that the historic episcopate is not necessary or essential.

Others would disagree that this is the way to go.[9] They would say Kolden's proposals undermine the orthodoxy promised in *CCM*. Braaten proposes emendations different from Kolden's. His hope is that the recovery of the historic episcopate in the ELCA will start "a process of reclaiming other dimensions of the Great Tradition that have been lost or diminished in recent decades."[10]

Canon II from 787 A.D.

In order to make Lutheran bishops orthodox it would seem that some sort of manual is needed. Currently Lutheran bishops are free to make up their own ministry of oversight. But if they are to be orthodox there must be an orthodox rule for them to follow so that, for instance, their parish visitations, work on the call process, and pastoral letters are orthodox. Such a rule or manual could be

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[6] Episcopal succession is "a sign . . . of the historical continuity of the church in its apostolic mission" that comes through "tactile succession" by the laying on of hands from "one who has gone before" which then tactilely "transfers . . . authority to preach the Word and administer the sacraments" to another. Because of this tactile element the transference is "not purely a matter of theological correctness." This belief is held even by those who know that such "an unbroken succession . . . all the way back to the apostles . . . cannot be proven" (Arland Hultgren, "Lutheranism and the Historic Episcopate," *dialog* 37 [Spring 1998]: 135, 140, 139).

[7] Bishop Spong's heterodoxy has been thoroughly and critically explored in *Can a Bishop Be Wrong?* ed. Peter C. Moore (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998).

[8] See Marc Kolden, "Denver: Disappointment or Disaster?" *dialog* 38 (Fall 1999): 242–44.

[9] Leonard Klein fears that what the ELCA adopted in Denver in August 1999 was actually only a "pale form of the historic episcopate" which was "shaved as thin as possible," as is evident in *CCM*'s formulation that bishops should serve "unlike most pastors, for a limited term and will not be permitted to ordain after retirement." Klein accordingly hopes that the ELCA's historic episcopacy will be changed in the near future to become a "more full and magisterial" office than the watered-down one in *CCM* ("The ELCA Joins the Mainline: The Denver Assembly," *Forum Letter* 28 [October 1999]: 1–7).

[10] Braaten, "It's the Episcopacy, Stupid!" 390.

If we are going to take the historic episcopate from the early church we should also take some version of their manuals for episcopal practice.

modeled on those venerable ones written by Bishop Ambrose, Pope Gregory the Great, and Bishop John Chrysostom.[11] If we are going to take the historic episcopate from the early church we should also take some version of their manuals for episcopal practice. But in a church as theologically fractured as the ELCA,[12] the prospects for producing such an operating manual for bishops are not very good.

So in lieu of writing such a rule there is another possibility. Some years ago the renowned Orthodox priest, Father Thomas Hopko, now retired academic dean and professor of theology at St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary in Crestwood, New York, suggested a way to make bishops orthodox. He said if the church is sincerely interested in having canonical or orthodox bishops it will need to do more than uphold Canon IV from the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) regarding how bishops are ordained. It will also have to reinstate Canon II from the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787 A.D.), which stipulates that "every one who is raised to the rank of the episcopate shall know the psalter by heart."[13] As I recall, everyone at the conference laughed when he proposed this—knowing full well that even orthodox priests would not then be qualified to serve in the office of bishop!

Mulling this over, I wrote to Martin E. Marty, one of the authors of *CCM*, asking what he thought of the idea, since Canon II was not included in *CCM*. He wrote back,

> The force of the verb "shall" is ambiguous: if it means that only those shall have been elected bishop who shall have already memorized the Psalter, that might cut the cohort of nominees considerably, but would enrich it. If it means that after election they "shall" learn the Psalter by heart, I'd be for that: it'd keep bishops out of mischief and help us all spiritually.[14]

I agree. Enriching bishops and keeping them out of mischief are noble goals. Nevertheless, this proposal is far less elaborate than a manual and so may not be specific enough to make any difference.[15] The Psalter even when memorized may still be misunderstood and twisted theologically.[16] As such it could hardly promote orthodoxy.

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[11] See *The Pastor: Readings From the Patristic Period*, ed. Philip L. Culberton and Arthur Bradford Shippee (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 132, 162, 186.

[12] Those theological alternatives to orthodoxy are "therapeutic religion, multiculturalist ideology, inclusivity quotas, new age spirituality, entertainment evangelism, lowest common denominator ecumenism, pantheistic ecomysticism, radical post- and anti-Christian feminism, [and] liberationist crusades of every ilk" (Braaten, *Mother Church*, 139).

[13] *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 556.

[14] Martin E. Marty, personal correspondence, July 12, 1999.

[15] Luther would probably disagree. "The Psalter," he writes, "ought to be a precious and beloved book, if for no other reason than . . . that it might well be called a little Bible" and so has value in and of itself (Martin Luther, Prefaces to the Old Testament [1545], *Luther's Works* 35:254).

[16] So in addition to memorizing the Psalter we might also ask our bishops to dust off their commentaries on the Psalms by St.

But still having so many holy words lodged in one's mind through the sheer act of memorization cannot be altogether bad. Even memorized biblical words that are poorly understood hold the promise of blessing us some day.[17] This is because we know the value of going "from the meanings back to the words, from interpretation back to the text, from what is within us to what is outside us."[18]

Rabbinical bishops

Psalmic bishops would also be rabbinical. As such they would retrieve the "chief office of a bishop," which is "the office of teaching."[19] Currently many Lutheran bishops have given up teaching for administrative obligations.[20] Being forced, however, to memorize the Psalter would change this. Time would have to be differently allocated. More concentration would be expended on Bible study. This would help bishops become more "zealous in the Word."[21] It would help them exercise their office "in and from the Word."[22]

Memorizing Scripture cannot but help increase one's zeal for it. This is because the "inexhaustibly repetitive rereading" which necessarily lies behind all memorization "textualizes" the reader.[23] A bishop "textualized" by the memorization of the Psalter would more likely be orthodox. Such a bishop could not help but "ruminate on the Word."[24] This rumination would lead them inexorably to think and speak "in the way Scripture does."[25] This would help them keep their ministries of oversight "regulated by the Word."[26] As such there would no longer be any good reason to complain that "any oversight" whatsoever is "objectionably hierarchical."[27] Under these provi-

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Augustine (392–420), Martin Luther (1518–1529), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1940), Sigmund Mowinckel (1962), Mitchell Dahood (1966–1970), and Hans-Joachim Kraus (1988–1989).

[17] Nevertheless, the objection that "the church cannot blindly memorize the psalter without carefully investigating the image of God therein" cannot be ignored. See Gail Ramshaw, *God Beyond Gender: Feminist Christian God-Language* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 13.

[18] David S. Yeago, "Words and Meanings: A Meditation on the Sources of Contemporary Apostasy," *Ad Fontes: A Journal of Evangelical Catholic Lutheranism* 2 (After Pentecost 1990) 13–15. He concludes that it is good to memorize Scripture: "it is the words, textual, audible, and visible, which are the gift of God. To seek salvation by God's gift rather than our works means turning ever again from the meanings back to the words, to acknowledge that we can never make the words altogether ours. They are his words, the words of the Lord, not our possession, never absorbed into our meanings."

[19] Martin Luther, Lectures on Titus (1527), *Luther's Works* 29:32.

[20] See Linda-Marie Delloff, "Synod Bishops," *The Lutheran* 6 (August 1993): 26–27. Luther thought this failure to teach was also "because nothing is definite with them." Rabbinical bishops, however, would "hand down what people must know" (Luther, Lectures on 1 Timothy [1528], *Luther's Works* 28:286).

[21] Luther, Lectures on Zechariah (1526), *Luther's Works* 20:127.

[22] Carl Axel Aurelius, "Luther on the Psalter," *Lutheran Quarterly* 14 (Summer 2000): 204.

[23] Paul J. Griffiths, *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 46.

[24] Luther, Lectures on the First Epistle of St. John (1527), *Luther's Works* 30:219.

[25] Luther, Lectures on Romans (1518), *Luther's Works* 25:261.

[26] Luther, Lectures on Isaiah, Chapters 40–66 (1530), *Luther's Works* 17:144.

[27] Michael J. Root, "Opposition to *Called to Common Mission*," *Lutheran Forum* 34 (Easter 2000): 10.

Memorizing Scripture cannot but help increase one's zeal for it.

sions their oversight[28] would be good simply because it is biblical.

This is especially so regarding the Psalter because of its challenging message. At times God in this varied "psalmic spirituality" is the "guarantor of the old equilibrium. At other times God is a harbinger of the new justice to be established. At times also God is in the disorientation, being sovereign in ways that do not strike us as adequate."[29] Here we see an orthodoxy that is anything but boring and dusty and therefore especially lends itself well to memorization.

Promoting the historic episcopate properly

So, if the adoption of the historic episcopate by the ELCA is to be truly celebrated as a step in the direction of orthodoxy, we must seriously consider expecting our bishops to be psalmic. The whole possibility of psalmic bishops according to Canon II of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea should become as much a part of the discussion about the future of orthodoxy in the ELCA as has been the adoption of the historic episcopate.[30]

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[28] This oversight was amended at the August 2001 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Indianapolis in an attempt to ward off criticisms of *CCM*. This was done by passing a bylaw to change §20 of *CCM* which said that only "bishops shall preside . . . at ordinations of all clergy." This new bylaw "contravened" *CCM* by allowing "an ELCA pastor, if authorized by a synod bishop, to ordain an approved pastoral candidate for pastoral reasons in unusual circumstances" (Jean Caffey Lyles, "ELCA Tinkers With Ecumenism," *The Christian Century* [September 12–19, 2001], 6). Not all critics of *CCM* were thereby satisfied, however. Some said it would be "easy to imagine bishops [under this new bylaw] saying, 'Personally, I'm flexible, but I'm being pressured from above not to allow exceptions'" ("Uhopia," *Lutheran Commentator* 15 [September/October 2001]: 3).

[28] Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 67, 74.

[30] In this regard it is lamentable that the phrase "safeguard the . . . apostolicity of the church" in §10 of the April 1998 version of *CCM* was removed from the August 1999 final version.

Book Reviews

Dying in the Land of Promise: Palestine and Palestinian Christianity from Pentecost to 2000. By Don Wagner. London: Melisende, 2001. $19.95.

A colleague recently asked, "Aren't Palestinians all Muslims? Isn't the Israeli-Palestinian conflict between Jews and Muslims?" Many are simply unaware of Palestinian brothers and sisters of the Christian faith. Others, who may be aware of them, assume they are recent coverts resulting from American and European mission efforts.

Don Wagner, professor at North Park University in Chicago, has written an important work that tells the story of the deep roots of Palestinian Christianity planted at Pentecost and growing without interruption for two thousand years. Yet the irony, as evident in the title *Dying in the Land of Promise*, is that Palestinian Christians are a dying breed—due to the twentieth-century conflict and increased emigration.

The plan of this book is unprecedented, balancing the broad historical overview of two thousand years of Palestinian Christian history with careful, incisive analysis of the issues shaping the current conflict. Chapters 1 to 3 present a general historical overview from the birth of Palestinian Christianity at Pentecost through its dynamic encounter with Islam characterized by tolerance and respect. Chapters 4 to 6 describe events that will affect permanently the church of the Holy Land from the rise of Zionism in response to European anti-Semitism, to the critical decisions of the British Mandate era, to the catastrophe of the Palestinians that resulted from Zion's triumph. Chapters 7 through 9 treat the events of the last fifty years from a thematic perspective including the issue of land and land loss, the deliberate effort to negate the Palestinian national identity, and Oslo as the culmination of fifty different peace processes in the twentieth century. With all good intentions, the latter, while meant to give life, seemed destined to sing the death knell for Palestinian Christianity. One senses the further one moves through the book the more the Israeli-Palestinian conflict takes over and dominates, stifling and strangling the earlier vibrant story of Palestinian culture and history.

It is thus appropriate that Wagner titles the final chapter "Death or Resurrection." Here he asks whether "there are unique and perhaps not so unique roles for Palestinian Christians to play in terms of being a sign of 'redemptive suffering,' reconciliation, and seeds of renewal."

A number of factors make this a must-read:

1. Wagner's specialization in understanding the modern, radical dispensational views of Christian fundamentalism—other books include *Anxious for Armageddon, Peace or Armageddon,* and *All in the Name of the Bible*—helps to enlighten the twentieth-century part of the story, especially with regard to British politicians intent on granting to a third party (the Zionists) land that was not theirs to offer and with regard to the role of American TV preachers in shaping American attitudes toward the Middle East.

2. Wagner's role as former National Director of the Palestinian Human Rights Campaign adds an eyewitness dimension to many critical events of the last quarter century and to the suffering that ensued.

3. Wagner is conversant with "The New Israeli Historians," such as Benny Morris, Ilan Pape, and others, who with access to declassified Hebrew documents have recently offered a self-critical challenge to many of the traditional myths concerning the establishment of modern Israel.

Wagner is skilled in presenting complex issues in a clear and readable fashion. He draws from deep wells of scholarly research and offers it up as a refreshing and cool drink. Each chapter begins with a vignette and ends with a series of summary statements. This all makes *Dying in the Land of Promise* an ideal resource for Bible classes and other adult study groups.

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A Feminist Ethic of Risk. By Sharon Welch. Revised edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000. 206 Pages. Paper. $19.00.

In the 1980s, the Iron Curtain seemed indestructible and movies like *Wargames* integrated popular interest with the technology of the Cold War. Near the end of that decade, Sharon Welch penned the first edition of *A Feminist Ethic of Risk.* Truly a contextual ethicist, Welch has revised the book to speak to life after the Cold War yet life still plagued by violence and Euro-American self-justified prominence.

The book's title describes "a method of ethical reflection *as* feminist. It is wrong, however, in implying that the ethic of risk itself *is* feminist." Risk is not limited to feminists. Although feminists may approach or respond to ethical decisions with a particular emphasis, this collection of articulate critiques, raised by women and men, provides a global circle from which to learn. Welch could also have used the title, "An Ethic of Risk from a Feminist Perspective." Less succinct, to be sure, but nonetheless reflective of ears tuned toward people on the margins.

Womanist literature is a fountain of hope for those mulling over matters of morality. Wrought from survival in the face of oppression, womanists lift up humanity's sad capacity for harm as well as its remarkable powers for healing. Womanist literature recognizes our holiness and our guilt, our concave and convex visions. Luther may chime in here. *Simul justis et peccator,* so the Latin refrain goes. Simultaneously saint and sinner we humans are; with the gift of faith we have the opportunity to embrace complex ethical decisions, informed by the complexity of human nature.

At its most technical, this book may not fit smoothly between visits at the nursing home and parsonage maintenance. However, as with all ministries, ethical decisions reflect the faith we claim. Welch states the goals of working together as a flawed and committed people: "love for oneself, for the oppressed, and for those working against oppression." I would add that communal love applies not only to those she has identified but also to the enemy. There lies the risk: to dwell in the web between justice and mercy. By all means, sound the horn for justice. Hold the oppressor (also flawed and committed) accountable. Collaborate against oppression and name the labor on behalf of justice as a perpetually bold sin.

Bonnie J. Flessen
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Understanding Early Christian Art. By Robin Margaret Jensen. London: Routledge, 2000. xii and 221 pages. Paper. $25.99.

Writing art history is a very difficult task. The author must know both the style and iconography of the art and the history that it reflects. The historian of early Christian art must know the art of the first six centuries, but also the Christian literature for the same period. Well aware of this task, Jensen spends the first section of her work describing various ways in which art history and text history can function together. Jensen then surveys the several types of art found in Christian circles: non-narrative images or symbols; pictorial representations; portraits of Jesus or incarnate God; images of the suffering redeemer; and pictures of the resurrection, or new life. Jensen moves through the material as she has promised: she interprets the art as art, but in light of early Christian texts or liturgy. She does not use the art to justify or support the text.

For example, she knows that the Good Shepherd is a non-Christian symbol and that its relationship to the shepherd passages in the NT is tenuous. But she finds the shepherd image used in such pieces as the Abericus epitaph or the martyrdom of Perpetua. Using Clement's reference to heavenly milk, she suspects that the shepherd, with a bucket of milk or a ewe, refers to the use of milk in the baptismal liturgy. That may clarify why the Good Shepherd appears above the baptistery of the Dura Europos house church (pp. 37–41). Or, in another example, Jensen discusses at length the apparent lack of artistic representation of Jesus on the cross. She mentions a number of reasons for the striking absence: shame, Docetism, or a mystery too profound to be depicted. Then she turns to early texts and liturgies. In them there is no lack of references to the death of Jesus on the cross. Aware that the cross was certainly known in the

act of worship, she then asks if early Christians might not have seen the cross in more subtle symbols like the tau-cross, or the popular mast of a boat or even the anchor—as suggested by some early writers (pp. 130–41). These are typical examples of how Jensen interprets art and text in light of each other.

Understanding Early Christian Art is the best available book on the subject. Everyone who interprets the Bible needs access to visual input as well as intellectual exegesis. Jensen's ability to "touch every base" is commendable and remarkable. At the same time I do believe the art refers more to the social and political context than to theological texts. For example, I think the Good Shepherd referred more to the compassion of the early faith community than to any theological or liturgical motif. While Jensen may not agree with this, she offers the reader all the options.

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Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians. Edited by Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman, and Simon Price. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. x and 315 pages. Cloth. $82.00.

This is a first-rate collection of essays that examines apologetic literature in the first three centuries of the Roman Empire. In a cultural context marked by a great variety of religious traditions, apologetic is broadly defined as the defense of a religion against actual or perceived opponents. Although some of the authors maintain that there was no formal genre of apologetic, each of the essays provides close readings of texts that were responding to criticism of the particular religious tradition they represent. The study of this literature over a span of three centuries and across pagan, Jewish, and Christian traditions provides valuable insights into some of the common themes and issues that persisted amidst a changing religious and political landscape. This may be particularly instructive for Christian readers who are familiar only with the Christian apologists. At different points in time each of these religious traditions is depicted as a minority group trying to define itself vis-à-vis the larger culture.

It is impossible to do justice in a short review to the erudition that characterizes each of these essays, but a sampling of the main arguments of some of them may serve to disclose the contours of the big picture gleaned from reading the entire book. Loveday Alexander's chapter on Acts as an apologetic text is a tour de force that considers five options for classifying Acts as apologetic literature. She argues, convincingly in my view, that the bulk of Paul's defense is addressed to a Jewish audience and answers charges that are concerned with matters of Jewish rather than Roman law. This engagement with Judaism is fundamental to Christian self-definition well into the third century and one of the dominant themes in Christian apologetic literature. In a chapter on Eusebius' apologetic writings, Michael Frede discusses his response to the question raised by Porphyry of why Christians apostasize from Hellenism to Jewish Scripture and then apostasize again by refusing to follow Jewish law and custom. In her chapter on Justin's Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, Tessa Rajak addresses the problem of anti-Judaism in Christian apologetics. Along with Alexander and other authors in the volume, she imagines an audience of insiders who would benefit from the perspective and guidance offered by these texts in relating to their critics.

The other predominant topos common to apologetic literature in all three religious traditions is their relationship to Hellenistic culture. Martin Goodman shows that the topic that dominates the first half of Josephus' *Against Apion* is his response to the accusation that Jews were not mentioned by Greek authors because they lacked antiquity. Francis Young finds a similar struggle for social and political recognition in the Greek apologists of the second century. Fundamental to the argument of these writers was the claim that the Jewish Scriptures were more ancient and therefore more authoritative than the revered literature of antiquity. During the first two centuries of the Common Era these apologetic texts indicate that Greco-Roman culture served as the frame of reference for the formation of Jewish and Christian identity so that even in distinguishing themselves they borrowed from the

very culture they challenged. For example, Goodman notes that the qualities in Judaism stressed by Josephus were the same qualities claimed for ancient Roman morality. Simon Swain's essay on Philostratus' *In Honor of Apollonius of Tyana* casts this phenomenon in an interesting light. He observes that with the ascendancy of Christianity in the third century distinctive features of pagan culture in the Greek east were under threat. In the context of this changing milieu he understands Apollonius as an apology for Pythagorean philosophy as a spiritual system of personal living. In Swain's estimation the primary difference between this apology for Hellenism and Christian apologetic texts is that Philostratus was still apologizing for the old, not the new.

In addition to the above-mentioned essays, there are two chapters on Latin Christian apologetics, a chapter on Origin's treatise *Against Celsus*, and a final chapter on Constantine. This is an impressive volume that explicates the role of apologetic literature in legitimating a particular vision of life in relation to the Hellenistic cultural values that predominated and the religious and philosophical traditions of other groups in the Roman Empire. This collection will probably appeal most to scholars, but anyone who works through it will be rewarded with rich insights into this period of history.

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Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Post-Classical World. Edited by G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar. Cambridge, MA, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1999. xvi and 780 pages. Cloth. $49.95.

Scholarly interest in late antiquity (roughly 150–800 A.D.) has burgeoned in recent years among classical, historical, and theological researchers, so much so that there is now room for a comprehensive survey of the results of that scholarship that will examine Late Roman, Byzantine, Parthian, and Islamic society, culture, and thought. And that is just what this large, beautifully conceived and produced volume gives us in a double format. It begins with eleven essays on the following topics: "Remaking the Past" by Averil Cameron, "Sacred Landscapes" by Beatrice Caseau, "Philosophical Tradition and the Self" by Henry Chadwick, "Religious Communities" by Garth Fowden, "Barbarians and Ethnicity" by Patrick J. Geary, "War and Violence" by Brent D. Shaw, "Empire Building" by Christopher Kelly, "Christian Triumph and Controversy" by Richard Lim, "Islam" by Hugh Kennedy, "The Good Life" by Henry Maguire, and "Habitat" by Yizhar Hirschfeld. These essays are clear and well documented, and together they provide a coherent brief synthesis of the history and culture of the era.

Pages 273–780 are a dictionary of this period, made up of short, signed articles by a carefully selected group of international scholars. They provide fundamental information about institutions, cities, architecture, governments, warfare and politics, significant persons, philosophy, theology, and social structures in this period. The volume can be used in many ways. One might read the longer articles to get a more detailed overview of the period. The dictionary section serves as a basic reference work on the period, while the articles in both sections are well written and packed with information and invite the interested reader to browse. Two maps, fifteen colored illustrations, and scattered black-and-white illustrations clarify and expand the verbal descriptions. Bibliographies are selective, but useful. In short, this volume does what its editors intended: "With this Guide in hand, we hope that the interested reader will travel, with sufficient basic information, from the world of Constantine to the seemingly different world of the Damascus of Abd al-Malik—and may be surprised to see that not everything has changed" (p. xi). It meets that goal admirably; readers can cross temporal, spatial, and cultural boundaries with this book in hand to discover a world largely unknown to the Western mind—a great gift indeed. The work belongs in every academic and theological library and in the hands of all interested in theology and history.

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Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust. Edited by Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999. vi and 224 pages. Paper. $22.00.

During the Nazi years, with few exceptions, the pastors, priests, and ministers of the German churches, both the so-called German Christians and the Confessing Church of Lutherans, Evangelical Church Christians, and other non-Roman Catholic Christians and the Roman Catholic Church in Germany supported the Nazi efforts. According to the evidence provided by the historians whose research is summarized in this collection of essays, even within situations in which silence would have been morally and politically possible, very prominent church leaders expressed their support for Nazi policies. Consequently, the Christian lay people of Germany were reassured that the Nazi programs were not in conflict with Christian faith and morals.

In much less detail than the analysis provided by Wolfgang Gerlach in his *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews* (2000), but examining the publications and the actions not only of the Confessing Church pastors and professors but also of the German Christians and Roman Catholics, those who contributed this collection of essays conclude that the most significant factor in Germany from 1933–45 relevant to this issue was the widespread antisemitism of the German, Polish, and other European Christian people. Without that pervasive antisemitism, the clergy and lay people of the German churches would not have excluded "non-Aryan" Christians from the clergy roles and then from church participation. It was because of this antisemitism, developed over the course of many decades and centuries, that Christians who had Jewish backgrounds or who were married to Jews were identified and excluded from church activities by the majority in the churches, and there was little concern expressed over the atrocities committed against millions of Jews.

Although our situation is obviously different from that of the Christians of Germany during the Nazi years, there is a frightening parallel today in this country in the seeking out for exclusion from the clergy of dedicated, qualified, clearly called to the Christian ministry persons who are in committed same-sex relationships. Decades after courageous leaders within our churches and denominations bring an end to this exclusion, historians of the church will attribute this exclusion that causes so much suffering in our time and place to the excluded pastors, to the members of their families, and to the bishops who dare to support them to the fear, lack of understanding, and widespread and long-term discrimination against this minority within our churches, our contemporary parallel to the widespread antisemitism in Germany.

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Decolonializing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins. By Fernando F. Segovia. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2000. xi and 177 pages. Paper. $24.00.

A more apt subtitle for Fernando Segovia's fascinating, slightly polemical contribution to biblical studies might be "the margins pushing the center." Pushing is Segovia's agenda in this volume. In it he maps the current landscape of biblical studies with "a view from the margins," all the while pushing the center to recognize and listen to the voices of all people. Readers may find this volume provocative, especially if they cut their theological teeth on historical criticism and/or subscribe wholeheartedly to the same.

Segovia's method of pushing is cultural studies, more specifically decolonialization. This process is one whereby the increasingly audible voices from the margins (feminist, African, African-American, etc.) come into conversation with and directly challenge the center of power (historical criticism, literary criticism, and so forth), a center he often calls the "traditional Eurocentric perspective" (p. 85).

One of the major accomplishments of this book is its opening up of the hermeneutical landscape of text, reader, and meaning. A major interpretive question that undergirds the whole volume is the question of where or how meaning

happens. Is it primarily in the ancient text, the ancient community, the literary form, the scientifically objective methodology, or somewhere else? Segovia's answer, as I read it, is that meaning or truth comes contemporaneously in the dialogue between text and reader/reading community. This answer leads to a process of liberation from the colonial methodologies that look for "the objective meaning" of the text. Segovia sees and advocates "an undeniable process of 'liberation' and 'decolonialization': a movement away from the longstanding control of theological production by European and Euro-American voices and perspectives toward the retrieval and revalorization of the full multiplicity of voices and perspectives in the margins" (p. 123).

The volume itself is a collection of essays, compiled and edited by the author. As such a compilation, the volume tends to be quite repetitive in its construction and language. On a brighter note, however, the footnotes of Segovia's work are thorough and provide a host of sources for further exploration.

Segovia's collection of essays, in the end, is refreshing in that it pushes those who work on a daily basis with both biblical texts and real people to see new hermeneutical and political vistas on the horizon of biblical studies. Most important, Segovia in this book pushes pastors and theologians to really hear the interpretations of the whole community of believers, theologically educated or not.

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A Short Systematic Theology. By Paul F. M. Zahl. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000. viii and 109 pages. Paper. $12.00.

With this delightful gem, Zahl, dean of the Cathedral Church of the Advent (Episcopal) in Birmingham, Alabama, offers a concise summation of the gospel and its impact on life, a work appropriate for personal or group study. His book is decisively Protestant, deeply sensitive to the German Lutheran and Reformed traditions. He builds on his earlier interests in *The Protestant Face of Anglicanism* (Eerdmans, 1998). Zahl's approach to theology is nonspeculative, narrative-based, brief but meaty and intense, sensitive to contemporary pop culture and yet markedly scholarly. Here one will find developed decisive Lutheran themes such as the practical nature of theology, the hiddenness of God in both nature and the cross, Jesus as the friend of sinners, the inability of humanity to escape from the impurity of the heart, sin as self-justification, and the hiddenness of the Spirit's work in the community of the church. In sum, Zahl positions his own work in relation to that of Luther's: "For Luther the unifying principle was God's justification of sinners through Christ's atonement, with the resulting freedom of the Christian. With that principle always in view, the Reformer never needed to organize the rest of his thought. This is the essential model for all theology that is free" (p. 84).

The following points are decisive for Zahl's theology. While God can only be known fully in Christ, God is not divorced from nature—including its sometimes-unfriendly ways toward humanity. Yet, from Christ, we discern that God's will for humanity is a liberation of life—God restructures life from that of "a play of marionettes into life as action and will" (p. 11). Jesus pointed beyond the externals of Jewish legal obedience to the will and its impulses as corrupt, indeed so injured that human agency is unable to heal it (p. 16). Indeed, as an expression of divine love with his gracious invitation to the publicans and tax collectors, Jesus surpassed the law with its demands (p. 19). While this hospitality led Jesus to the cross, such victimization is not beyond God's means of working *sub contrario*, the "opposite of [God's] reasoned attributes such as strength and authority and life" (p. 28) to redeem and renew humanity. While Christians currently live "in the presence of [Jesus'] absence" (p. 35), since Jesus is raised from death and ascended to heaven, we are permitted a direct, nonmediated relation to God (p. 37) and led by the Spirit who we are unable to tame (p. 30). Christ is our "substitute" and as such brings us sinners to God (p. 60). Christian theology is christologically construed, and thus we see God as Trinity, yet this doctrine is "too

intellectual to fuel the Christian movement" (p. 73), which is then properly fueled by the Spirit's agency in us.

This book gets to the core of Christian beliefs quickly and is also fully confident that the historic Protestant tradition speaks to today's concerns. It could be tackled by adult groups in congregations, pastors' study groups, and introductory college or seminary classes. Zahl's is a refreshing voice thanks to his confidence about the gospel.

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Divine Becoming: Rethinking Jesus and the Incarnation. By Charlene P. E. Burns. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002. ix and 197 pages. Paper. $18.00.

The Council of Chalcedon formulated the orthodox doctrine in the year 451: Jesus Christ is "truly God and truly man." Yet the minds of Christian people have continued to struggle with the paradox of how the divine and human natures might be united in a single person. This book opens with a clear and concise description of the history, scriptural basis, and theological development of christological doctrine. Reference is made to the idea of incarnation in other world religions. Particular attention is paid to the classic controversy between Arius and Athanasius. The author is especially drawn to the Eastern Orthodox rendering of the Chalcedonian definition of hypostatic union, whereby salvation is understood as participation in the process of deification that occurs by the grace of God.

Charlene Burns, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire, has developed a creative proposal for reconciling the two-natures doctrine, employing contemporary psychoanalytical theories. In response to her elaboration of the christological problem, she draws upon the theories of entrainment (the human capacity to enter into rhythmic physiological synchrony with others) and empathy (the ability to identify closely with the emotional state of another) in order to understand the union of the divine and human in Jesus. These theories are grounded in the theology of a God of "sympathetic responsive love," characteristic of process theologians like Hartshorne and Whitehead. God's capacity for pathos (W. Thompson) and empathy (E. Farley) is a fundamental human possibility as well.

The human "capacity for participation" that includes the four modes of entrainment, affect attunement, sympathy, and empathy provide the key for a new interpretation of Christ's two natures. "Jesus entrained, attuned to and lived in sympathy with fellow humans, the divine cosmic *sympatheia*, and with God. He saw himself as distinct from yet intensely in relation with God, and lived a nearly empathic relation with God, a deeply empathic relation to others. In other words, Jesus' relationship with God and humanity was one of full participation. . . . Because we are finite, it is necessarily true that the experience of the infinite God is always mediated. Jesus was the symbolic means through which God has been revealed as the matrix of relationality" (p. 126f.). This is a compelling explanation of how the divinity of Jesus is the realization of a human capacity that is intrinsic to every human being. One doctrinal question raised by the book is whether this christological proposal gives rise to a semi-Pelagian notion of salvation.

Divine Becoming is a beautifully articulated and carefully reasoned book, conversant with the classical theological tradition. Charlene Burns creatively incorporates interdisciplinary research into the human phenomena of entrainment, attunement, and altruism to interpret the meaning of incarnation. Where divine empathy meets the human capacity for self-transcendence on behalf of others, there deification occurs like unto Jesus. This book offers an inspirational vision of the meaning of incarnation and the possibility of deification for all. Would that it were humanly possible to aspire to Burns' understanding of a life lived in attunement and empathy for God and for others!

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Gnosis and Faith in Early Christianity: An Introduction to Gnosticism. By Riemer Roukema. Translated by John Bowden. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999. xii and 212 pages. Paper. $23.00.

This introductory handbook on early Christian gnosticism was originally published in Dutch in 1998. Part 1 pieces together the basic gnostic myth from the writings of Irenaeus and selected Nag Hammadi writings. Part 2 explores the religious and philosophical movements that influenced the development of gnosticism, primarily Platonic philosophy, interpretations of the Genesis creation accounts in Judaism, and the mystery religions. In Part 3 Roukema defines Christian gnosticism as a radical form of the Platonizing of Christianity. It seeks an answer to the question of the origin of evil and sees redemption as the recall of humanity's true origin in the highest God. Gnosticism typically drives a wedge between this highest God and the creator of the world, so that the knowledge of one's true divine origin will enable one to escape from a fundamentally meaningless earthly life. Part 4 looks at the historical and theological relationship between gnosticism and "Catholic" Christianity. In a final assessment Roukema is critical of the gnostic dualism between the highest God and the created earth, since it leads to a sense of the irretrievable meaninglessness of life on earth.

This book is a readable basic introduction for pastors, students, and interested lay people, assuming no previous knowledge. One drawback is that there is little discussion of issues of interpretation on which scholars disagree. The footnotes refer almost entirely to the primary sources. It is refreshing, though, to be guided as by a detective through these sources to see how we can piece together an historical account of an important early Christian movement. Anyone who is curious about gnosticism and the sensationalist claims sometimes made about it will do well to pick up this reliable guide.

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The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. CD-Rom Edition. Leiden: Brill, 2000. $399.00 (Windows or Macintosh).

Despite its hefty price tag (but that is more than $100 cheaper than the print version), this electronic copy of the third edition of the Koehler and Baumgartner lexicon will be welcomed by all serious students of the Old Testament. The CD I am reviewing contains all four volumes of the Hebrew lexicon, but the latest Brill catalogue has an updated version of the CD that contains the fifth volume (Aramaic) as well.

My previous reviews of the print edition have pointed out that this is the most up-to-date Hebrew lexicon (the famous Brown, Driver, Briggs lexicon was last revised in 1913) and takes full advantage of the enormous strides in our understanding of parallel Semitic languages as well as the fruits of intense philological study on the Hebrew text itself. The translation from the German by M. E. J. Richardson is also of the highest quality. An American lexicon of the Old Testament will be produced by faculty members at Princeton Theological Seminary, but it is many years in the offing.

There are many advantages to the CD-Rom:

- Portability. The five volumes of the print version have more than 2,000 pages, making it extremely difficult to use the same set at home and at the office or on the road. Those who have worked with the print edition soon weary of pulling volume after volume off the shelf.
- The CD version is color-coded: blue for Hebrew and for English definitions; black for chapter and verse; red for parallel Hebrew expressions; and green for abbreviations. Click on an unknown abbreviation and a pop-up box identifies the reference (in case you forget that MAOG is *Mitteilungen der Altorientischen Gesellschaft*, from Leipzig). Click on a chapter and verse reference and one is taken to a full English version. One can also highlight words or sentences in an entry with multiple colors.
- A given entry can be printed for convenient study or copied into a word processor, or the text can be enlarged (good for tired or aging eyes). Or it can be projected on the wall in a seminary classroom.

• A library browser on the left allows users to find a given word alphabetically, just as one would do with the print edition—only much faster.
• The dictionary is searchable. Type the English word *covenant* in the search engine, and one is provided with a list of the thirty-six articles in which the English word *covenant* occurs. That kind of information is unavailable in the print version. Or type the word *Saul* and the list shows fifty-one articles somehow referring to the first king of Israel. Much more sophisticated searches, using the Boolean operators, are also possible.
• This CD is part of the Logos Library System. Those already familiar with this system will find the standard set of commands and options and can search not only in the lexicon but in other reference tools they have purchased from Logos.

A hearty "Well done!" to the folks at Brill.

Ralph W. Klein

Theology for the Community of God. By Stanley J. Grenz. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, and Vancouver: Regent College Publishers, 2000. xxxii and 691 pages. Paper. $34.00.

Baptist theologian Stanley J. Grenz's one-volume systematic theology is a fine example of recent evangelical scholarship, concerned to integrate the pietistic and rationalistic dimensions of the Christian faith. However, it is distinctive in its "integrative motif," that is, "God's central program for creation, namely the establishment of community" (p. xxxi). This offers Grenz "a fruitful point of departure because it lies at the heart of the biblical vision and of the longings of humankind as we move into the emerging postmodern era" (p. xxxi).

The book is divided into six major sections: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology. Grenz begins each section with a biblical and historical survey before presenting his own position, which is as influenced by his former professor Wolfhart Pannenberg as his Baptist forebears. Well organized and clearly written, this introductory text covers much ground.

The integrative motif is a major strength of the book. From his social doctrine of the Trinity as "community of love," to his formulation of the *imago Dei* as a community concept referring to humans as "beings-in-fellowship," to his interpretation of sin as the destruction of community, and the atonement as revealing, effecting, and originating God's eschatological community, Grenz challenges the Protestant tendency to focus primarily on the individual.

His evangelical background is reflected in his choice of subtopics, which is both a weakness and a strength. His central category for salvation is "conversion," with justification treated all too briefly as one "metaphor" of salvation. His treatment of ecclesiology lacks any discussion of the relationship between church and state (or society). Feminist concerns likewise receive minimal attention. On the other hand, Grenz addresses topics not often found in mainline Protestant systematics, such as angelology and the millennium. Parish pastors searching for a reliable guide to these more popular theological topics do well to refer to Grenz's thoughtful presentation of them—even if they don't agree with every conclusion.

Cheryl Peterson
Marquette University
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The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ. By Martin Hengel. Translated by John Bowden. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International. 354 pages. Paper. $30.00.

Impervious to any doctrine that the truth of a critical perspective ought to be measured in terms of its longevity or popularity, Martin Hengel explores anew the origin of the four gospels as distinguished documents and their rise to canonical status. Methodological caution punctuates his study, which ultimately focuses on the relation of the content of the four gospels and the proclamation concerning Jesus. Among Hengel's admonitions are the following:
—Be wary of a theory of "chaotic" text form brought to order by canonization in the mainstream church.

—The very idea of Q (alleged source of material mostly common to Matthew and Luke but not found in Mark) elicits suspicion, for its alleged existence may well be a fantasy masking desire to exhibit Jesus as a teacher of morality (shades of Harnack).
—Cheap shots by hyper-critics, with, for example, glib assertions of a 'post-Easter' tradition, contribute little to real historical inquiry.
—It is inadvisable to attach the four gospels to individual "communities." Letters, not gospels, were occasioned by communities. We cannot even speak of a Q community, because we do not know in what form or forms this alleged source existed.
—Fundamentalist rationalistic exegesis makes the New Testament a law book and is as unhelpful for real historical and theological understanding as radical historical skepticism.

Such propositions anchor Hengel's principal thesis, that the human and exalted Lord come as a package and that attempts to isolate one from the other are in effect docetic. The proclamation of Jesus as Christ and Lord and God's means of salvation for the world constitutes the One Gospel, which takes on narrative form in the history of Jesus in the four gospels. Rudolf Bultmann and others have erred by turning the history of Jesus into a mere Christ idea.

Most of the data on the canonical development of the gospels are well known, but Hengel offers an interesting refresher course as he examines and rearranges well-known pieces in this reappraisal of ancient lore. The text of the gospels is the best-transmitted text in antiquity. Mark starts out strong, with Peter highlighted in contrast to the other gospels, and plays a central historical role in the genesis of the collection of the four gospels. Its unity of narrative and proclamation is striking and serves as a reminder that the history of Jesus is a fundamental part of the proclamation. The "Christ kerygma" is therefore not a cult legend. In the passage of time Mark sits in the shadow of Matthew and Luke. John the elder in Papias' account is identical with the elder in 2 and 3 John and probably the author of 1 John and the Fourth Gospel. Tatian wished to supply a unified work in protest against Marcion, but the church repudiated both Marcion and Tatian. Matthew dates between 90 and 100, is later than Luke, and may have been acquainted with the latter. But Matthew won first position owing to its messianic focus and because its author had knowledge of an old Aramaic collection of dominical sayings associated with the apostle Matthew. Luke, written about 75-80, emphasizes the verb εὐαγγελίζεσθαι and shows no trace of the widespread anti-Semitism of the educated Greco-Roman world. The Fourth Gospel was probably published shortly after 100. It displays a relatively low estimate of Mark as well as of the synoptic tradition. Respecting this last observation, one wonders how Hengel's view of the Fourth Gospel's emphasis on the unity of the church squares with its departure from the main pattern of well-established tradition exhibited in the synoptists. On the other hand, this gospel does indeed reflect the substance of Hengel's thesis on the unity of theology and history in the gospels, especially in the face of competition from "gnostic" and other types of gospels. Along the way he tackles the problem of Paul's apparent lack of interest in the history of Jesus of Nazareth.

Readers of Hengel's work should not fail to mine the 807 notes appended to the main text. They will be well rewarded for their diligence. Three helpful indexes conclude this informative book, which is certain to ensure lively discussion, and not least of all for Hengel's conscientious inquiry into the meaning of "Gospel."

Frederick W. Danker
St. Louis, Missouri

Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology. By Dwight N. Hopkins. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000. xii and 300 pages. Paper. $20.00.

Down, Up, and Over first reviews the social and religious forces that shaped slave religion in America and then considers how the central features of slave religion inform a contemporary constructive black theology of liberation.

Hopkins identifies three sets of forces decisive for slave religion. First are the racist theology and racist attitudes in church and culture. Second are the "sunup to sundown" forces of

slavery as a system and slavemasters in particular seeking to "constitute the African American self" as self-domesticating labor. Reading this material is an act of repentance for white Christians as Hopkins lays bare the extent to which Christianity was not merely complicit in but an active architect of slavery. Third are the "sundown to sunup" forces of African religious traditions and slave-interpreted Christianity aiming to "co-constitute" selves that were indeed *imago Dei*, created for freedom.

Hopkins constructs, in three parts, a contemporary black liberation theology fashioned in the crucible of slave religion. The doctrine of God explores "the Spirit of total liberation *for* us." Christology understands Jesus as "the Spirit of total liberation *with* us" (though Hopkins does not satisfactorily discuss atonement here). Theological anthropology regards *imago Dei* as "the Spirit of total liberation *in* us" for ourselves and all others. Liberation is both material (freedom in a context of justice) and spiritual (freedom as affirmation and dignity).

The discussion is arranged throughout around language, cultural identity, and macro/micro expressions of power (politics, economics, rituals, family life, etc.). Hopkins' use of historical materials, including extensive anecdotal slave records, is compelling. He writes with disciplined passion, though at times his discussion repeats itself and at times his language is unnecessarily dense. This is not an introductory level text, but it is an excellent resource for those wishing to appreciate the historical roots of black liberation theology.

David R. Weiss
Luther College
Decorah, IA

The Apostle of God: Paul and the Promise of Abraham. By John L. White. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999. xxxv and 277 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

This is a fascinating, interesting—if ultimately flawed—book on Paul's central theological conviction. White seeks to unite a reading of Paul based on Judaism with a concentration of Roman ruler cult, an interesting juxtaposition. Paul's "master metaphor" is God the creator, recognized in God's adoption of Abraham. This enables Paul to make sense of the resurrection, rethink his relation to the Mosaic law, and affirm the inclusion of Gentiles in God's adoption.

White structures his work in three sections. In the first he discusses "God's Character as Creator" within a longer discussion of Paul's epistolary rhetoric. There follows a discussion of "Greco-Roman Influences on Paul's Idea of God," which concentrates on the universalism of Augustus as emperor. He holds that this imperial rule influenced Paul's missionary universalism, as portrayed in Rom 1:13–15 and 15:15–25, 28. Here he is less than persuasive; the prophets and the Psalms of Solomon suggest a universalistic view quite apart from Roman influence. Part 3 seeks to bring the two earlier discussions together in a discussion of Christ's Lordship as the result of adoption in the resurrection and consequent Lordship, described in terms drawn from ruler cult.

This work is a signal attempt to unite Jewish matrix with Roman influence. The use of Augustan imperial art deserves commendation (the Prima Porta statue, Augustus as Pontifex Maximus). The case would be stronger if he had shown how universal this art was in the eastern Mediterranean and had added imperial art in the post-Augustan period, e.g., statues of Tiberius as priest, of Claudius as heroic figure, etc. But the terminology of God as Father and the resurrection as adoption means that the imagery associated with Augustus must apply to both God and Christ, which tells against using it as a general descriptor. Certainly this imagery influences some passages in the New Testament. I think of Phil 3:17–21 and Col 2:14–15. The tie to Romans is unconvincing. Thus White's work is challenging and persuasive in some details but not yet convincing in the uniting of three motifs: God as creator, adoption as major metaphor, and rule cult as universalizing influence.

Edgar Krentz

Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing. By Dennis A. Jacobsen. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001. x and 140 pages. Paper. $14.00.

This book has been born out of struggle, the struggle between the world as it is and the world as it should be. The Scriptures fill the minds of prophets with dreams of the world as God created it to be. The contradiction between the nightmare of poverty and violence and the dream of God's reign can give rise to anger turned inward as despair or turned outward in violent acts. It can also provoke people to come together and organize for social change. That is the purpose of this book.

Doing Justice provides both sage reasons for the church's engagement in congregation-based community organizing and experienced counsel for how to go about the task. The book is steeped in the author's experience in leading and training others in the way of community organizing. Jacobsen explains why it belongs to the church's mission to participate in community organizing. There is forthright talk about the reality of power, self-interest, and agitation in political activism, themes Christians usually misunderstand. Self-interest is defined with relationship to the attainment of a social good that benefits an entire group and therefore is to be distinguished from individual selfishness. Agitation is defined as "a means of getting others to act out of their own power and self-interest, out of their own vision for their life" (p. 66). Jacobsen gives examples of Jesus as an agitator for justice. Lutherans might see this as an expression of the first use of the law.

One of the most fascinating discussions involves the practice of "one-on-ones," interviews by an organizer with another individual that aim to build trust and focus commitment to a common cause. These conversations provide the grass-roots foundation for building a community-based organization that endures. Congregations can gain a deeper experience of community and purpose by their involvement in organizing. Many students from Wartburg Seminary have participated in immersions in the metropolitan Milwaukee congregation-based community organization called MICAH, where Jacobsen serves as a pastor, and have had their vision of the possibilities of urban ministry transformed. This book offers the reader a taste of what congregation-based community organizing has to offer. It is an invitation to learn more, perhaps by going to see such a model at work.

One question: Can the urban model documented in this book also be adapted for rural contexts where the need for community organizing is also great?

Craig L. Nessan

New Faith: A Black Women's Guide to Reformation, Re-Creation, Rediscovery, Renaissance, Resurrection, and Revival. By Sheron C. Patterson. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000. viii and 159 pages. Paper. $14.00.

Patterson, a UMC pastor, says *New Faith* aims "to bring restoration to damaged souls of Black women so they may see God clearly, themselves royally, other women as their sisters, and men as their brothers" (pp. 15–16).

Employing personal and pastoral anecdotes Patterson argues that black women have been miseducated by the traditional faith messages of the black church to accept personal and ecclesial domination by men, to mistrust black women who pursue leadership positions in the church, and to use Jesus' suffering to sacralize unnecessary and destructive suffering in their own lives. Far from equipping young black girls to challenge the racist and sexist limits of many social forces, the black church has been complicit in their oppression.

New Faith then casts the major themes of black womanist theology into black lay woman's vernacular, discussing the power of language and history as well as the need for self-affirmation and sisterhood. Patterson urges women to demand a new level of partnership with the men in their lives and churches. Her focus is eminently practical, covering fashion, vocation, dating, and marriage, as well as church life from pew to pulpit, from kitchen to committee.

Patterson writes for "black Christian sisters," providing discussion questions for this readership. Her language is so "inside" that

anyone not part of this audience may feel outside the conversation. Sometimes her claims come across with less than full nuance. Yet overall this book appears very well suited to wake up black women to the dynamics of oppression and to invite them into a faith relationship that more truly reflects God's will for them. Beyond its intended audience, it would be useful for those engaged in ministry with black women. And it would be a provocative choice for others seeking to understand the struggles and hopes of their black sisters.

David R. Weiss

The Bible on Culture. By Lucien Legrand. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000. xvii and 190 pages. Paper. $25.00.

While I was working as a religion tutor in college, a student from Laos asked a basic and important question about the prologue of the John's Gospel. "What is *logos*?" he asked. At that moment I realized how biblical texts reflect not only a community's faith but also a cultural immersion.

In his book *The Bible on Culture*, Lucien Legrand assumes that biblical literature is culturally conditioned. In doing so, he affirms the diversity of cultural influences that help form faith. "Just how faith affected culture, and how culture affected faith, needed closer scrutiny..." writes Robert Schrieter in the foreword. Legrand does indeed scrutinize the entire Bible. He draws attention to texts that specifically reveal tension between assimilation and distinctiveness.

For example, Israel's desire for a king "like the other nations" (1 Sam 8:5, 19) shows a degree of agreement with surrounding forms of government, and yet Israel's prophets denounced those who perverted God's justice with a hierarchical class structure (Amos 5:11–13).

Similar tension between assimilation and distinctiveness continues to exist during the ministries of Jesus and Paul. As in centuries prior to Jesus, "Judaism was an eclectic mix of regional and theological variations." Although Galilee was a rural area, Jesus would have been familiar with the Greek language and culture in nearby Sepphoris. Paul's mission drove Paul to many cities in the Diaspora, acquainting him with countless beliefs and practices that he had to address in his writings.

A former missionary to India, Legrand understands the challenge of inculturation facing the Christian faith today. This book will illumine and enrich mission. Christians will recognize their own cultural assumptions as well as the Bible's cultural assumptions. New myths, relevant to a particular culture, can arise and speak of God's grace using familiar and significant cultural symbols. The World Trade Center in New York City is a current symbol of destruction and enduring hope. Perhaps a creative story or myth could be set at the World Trade Center. This story could communicate God's persistent presence in times of adversity.

Bonnie J. Flessen

Briefly Noted

1 and 2 Kings. By Walter Brueggemann (Smith & Helwys, $65). Something new under the sun after all? This is the first volume in a new commentary series (30 volumes are projected) that intends to make serious biblical study accessible and presented in a less intimidating format. Hence there are pictures, maps, drawings, charts, and other sidebars of various types, linked to the main narrative by brown hyperlinks. The multimedia book comes with a CD-Rom that has the complete text, with graphics, that is searchable for words or topics that would never show up in an index. This long volume (645 pages) is divided into "Commentary" (exegesis) and "Connections" (hermeneutical applications to contemporary life). B. has been a master in the latter genre and rings expected changes here on the pretensions of royal life. Some comparisons raise an eyebrow—Jehoida with Gerald Ford's

pardon of Richard Nixon, the imbalance between the public and private lives of Josiah with Bill Clinton. One winces a bit at the title of the commentary on 1 Kings 11: "When the Chickens Come Home to Roost." Was Adonijah really an advocate of the old covenantal traditions, and were Jachin and Boaz, like the Washington Monument, phallic symbols that bespeak the interface of virility and reliability necessary for the foundation of a great state? The pictures of great paintings are somewhat disappointing because they are too few and only presented in black and white, also on the CD, and to my mind there are too many reprints of second-rate nineteenth-century woodcuts by Carolsfeld and Dore. B. is clearly following other modern readings of Kings, but the Deuteronomistic History is never expressly called that nor explained at any depth, and one would never know that for most scholars 1 Kings 1–2 is a continuation of the Court History or Succession Narrative. The power of this commentary finally lies in B.'s hermeneutical suggestions; the treatment of the history itself does not delve very deeply. *RWK*

Evocations of Grace. Writings on Ecology, Theology, and Ethics. By Joseph Sittler (Eerdmans, $20). Although he held a prestigious position at the University of Chicago and was highly influential in both Lutheran and ecumenical circles, not least at LSTC, Sittler did not earn a doctorate and published relatively little during his lifetime. Hence these ten essays can help a new generation learn about Sittler's "cosmic Christology" and his argument for the vital connection between Christian theology, ethics, and the natural world. Editors Steven Bouma-Prediger and Peter Bakken help us to understand that Sittler's reflections came from the time when Rachel Carson and her kin were only beginning to awaken the world from its ecological slumber. *RWK*

Richard Bauckham's 1996 Didsbury Lectures, now published as ***God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament*** (Eerdmans, $12), is a clear proposal that the New Testament uses the language of Jewish monotheism to "include Jesus within the unique identity of Israel's one God, while God's own character is revealed in Jesus' death and exaltation." A good edifying read that would be excellent preparation for Lenten proclamation.

Edgar Krentz

Isaiah. By Brevard S. Childs (Westminster John Knox, $59.95). Much has been changing in Isaiah studies in the last decades as scholars have detected a redactional unity to the book that, at least in part, transcends the divisions into First, Second, and Third Isaiah. C. builds on this research as he writes a commentary on the whole book of Isaiah. The canonical book, in his judgment, offers a coherent witness to the ways of God with Israel. C. and other scholars are not returning to single authorship in the eighth century, but they note links between chapters 1 and 65–66 and propose that "Second Isaiah" never existed independently and in fact may have been largely responsible for the present structure of chapters 1–39. "Third Isaiah," in turn, serves consciously to unite the major themes of both First and Second Isaiah into one literary composition. The final chapters of Isaiah use language from chapters 1–39 to indicate that God's servants will always be under attack from enemies, not, as Paul Hanson proposed, to give voice to specific warring parties in post-exilic Israel. This is a major theological commentary and the capstone of a long scholarly career invested heavily in the Bible's authority for the church today. Readers will profit greatly from the use of this commentary, but let me note also a few problems. Despite its 550 pages, the commentary is far too short (the introduction to Second Isaiah is two and one-half pages, there is virtually no textual criticism or defense of the fresh translation, and many details are not explained at all [e.g. the ambiguous significance of Isaiah's son Shearjashub]). Related to this is C.'s way of offering magisterial judgments on the work of others, judgments that need documentation and clarification (e.g., "Zimmerli has often overinterpreted the text and thus misconstrued the relationship" [between Second and Third Isaiah]). Finally, there are sentences that are unclear, in error, or in need of serious editing. *RWK*

Hammurabi's Laws. Text, Translation and Glossary. By M. E. J. Richardson (Sheffield, $35 paper; $90 cloth). This book presents the transliterated text of the laws of Hammurabi on pages facing an up-to-date translation. All this is followed by a glossary of Akkadian words, a list of proper names and units of measurement, and a list of verbal roots used in this law code. The author suggests that we can use this law code to draw some conclusions about the relationship between faith and works in Mesopotamian society at the beginning of the second millennium B.C.E. *RWK*

The Spirituality of Communion: A New Approach to the Johannine Writings, by Gerard Rossé (New City Press, $9.95) is a brief theology of the Gospel and Epistles of John. Rossé argues that Jesus, the revealer and revelation of God, calls for faith that issues in love; such love prevents an individual mysticism, as the prayer of John 17 and 1 John make clear. This argument against Christian privatism is useful; it could serve as the text for an adult forum on John. *EK*

The Bible is History. By Ian Wilson (Regnery Publishing, $29.95). This book contains nearly two hundred illustrations, almost all in full color, and attempts to correlate the Bible with archaeological findings. Many of the correlations are highly problematic, including linking the biblical flood to the inundation of the Black Sea in 5600 B.C.E. and placing Abraham's homeland in southeast Turkey, at a site called Urfa. W. dates the Exodus to the reign of Ahmose in the late sixteenth century and links both the plagues and the splitting of the Reed Sea to the explosion of a volcano on the Greek island of Thera. Jericho's fall is dated to 1400. Trouble is, the Amarna letters show no evidence for Israelite presence in the early fourteenth century—contra W.—and the earliest evidence for Israel in Palestine is usually thought to be the Merneptah stele of 1207 B.C.E. He "explains" the angel of Yahweh's destruction of 185,000 Assyrians by suggesting that the Assyrians drank polluted water from a pool filled by Hezekiah's engineers. Does such speculation save the Bible's historicity? He also gives credence to the witness of those who have supposedly come back from near-death experiences (pp. 245–46). His fundamentalist agenda is laid bare on pp. 245–47, including the charge that today's trendsetters label the Bible as bunk and are responsible for the decline in church attendance and the replacement of Bible education by ever more liberal sex education. My, my. *RWK*

The Pentateuch. A Social-Science Commentary. By John Van Seters (Sheffield, $28 paper; $73 cloth). V. S. offers a clear and comprehensive summary of Pentateuchal research, explaining and often challenging the positions of Wellhausen, von Rad, Noth, and Albright. Next he turns to new currents in this study since about 1975, an enterprise in which he has been a prime player. This is his summing up of a career focused on these questions. He concludes that J offers the most unified narrative strand and that P was composed from the start as a supplementation to and a revision of J. V. S. dates J *after* Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history, in the period of the exile between Ezekiel and Second Isaiah; P is post-exilic. He rejects any Deuteronomistic redaction of the Tetrateuch. In his view the process of canonization is a much later phenomenon that has nothing to do with the history of the Pentateuch's composition. Only Genesis 14 was added after P, in the Hellenistic period, and has Abraham pay homage to the priest-king of Jerusalem, the prototype of the Hellenistic high priests and the Maccabean kings. While the social setting of P and other tradents is reviewed, labeling this a "social-science" commentary strikes me as a bit of a misnomer. *RWK*

Seeing Salvation. Images of Christ in Art. By Neil Macgregor with Erika Langmuir (Yale, $35). The authors note that there are no contemporary accounts of Jesus' appearance, but Western art in depicting him has reflected the spiritual world of the artist, the desires of art patrons, or the needs of spectators. Seventy color and eight black-and-white pictures are balanced with an informative text that offers penetrating commentary on the art works themselves. A recent statue of a bald and beardless Jesus in Trafalgar Square called forth these comments: "You can't have a Christ figure like this. Where is his robe? Where is his beard? Where is his cross?" My

only regret is that the "canon" in this collection is primarily limited to European interpretations. Where are the interpretations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America? *RWK*

Colin J. Hemer's ***The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*** (Eerdmans, $29) is the most recent addition to The Biblical Resource Series, reprints of texts that make significant contributions to biblical studies. Originally published in England in 1986, Hemer sets the seven cities of the Apocalypse into their geographic, historical, and archaeological setting. In his introduction David Aune writes that this book "has perennial value and will continue to be consulted for years to come by those who want to wrestle with the complex problems presented by the text" (p. xxii). His words are right on target. *EK*

Saints and Sinners. Caravaggio and the Baroque Image. Edited by Franco Mormando (University of Chicago, $40). This is a collection of essays offering commentary on an art exhibition on Caravaggio (1571–1610) at the McMullen Museum of Art at Boston College. The violence of C.'s paintings reflect at once the Counter Reformation, the 658 public executions during his residence in Rome, and the homicide that prompted his sudden departure from Rome in 1606. His pessimism reached a climax in his self-portrayal as the decapitated Goliath, the year before his death. The victorious David in this picture embodies his alleged former lover. Scholars of our own day contend that C. painted some of the most moving religious pictures in the history of Western art. *RWK*

After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change. By Bruce W. Winter (Eerdmans, $28). Bruce Winter continues his interpretation of Paul in the light of Early Roman and Hellenistic Greek culture, concentrating on Paul's reaction to Corinthian competitive attitudes (1 Corinthians 1–4), the Corinthian use of Roman law (1 Corinthians 5–6), on Christian permissiveness (6:12–20; 10:25; 15:29–34), worship issues (veiled men and wives, 11:2–16, divisions in private meals, 11:17–34), curses (*tabulae defixiones,* chaps. 12–14), patronage (16:15–16), marriage (7:1–5, 25–38), imperial cult and temple meals (8:1–10:21), and kosher food and idol meat (10:25–28). There is excellent use of ancient Greek literature and epigraphic texts (though note 30, p. 275, should cite *SEG* 23, not 33) but less use of archaeological data than I expected (e.g., the dining rooms in the Asklepieion). He consistently misnames the American School of Classical Studies at Athens as the American School of Archaeology, e.g., p. xi. Winter describes his goal as follows: "to bring to life something of the first-century social and religious context of Corinth and help illuminate the text of 1 Corinthians for the reader" (p. xii). He meets his goal; pastors and students will find this immensely illuminating. *EK*

Conflicts and Challenges in Early Christianity, edited by Donald A. Hagner (Trinity Press International, $14), contains the 1997 lecture "Early Christianity as a Jewish-Messianic, Universalistic Movement" by Martin Hengel and C. K. Barrett's 1998 lecture "Paul: Councils and Controversies." Each considers a significant topic in early Christian history. Hengel argues that early Christianity only appropriated Graeco-Roman culture as it was mediated by Judaism, and thus is essentially Jewish in origin. Barrett ranges widely through Acts and the Pauline letters to understand the Jerusalem council (Acts 15 and Galatians 2). I found Barrett's essay especially fascinating. A concluding section contains some of the discussion following each lecture. An interesting little volume. *EK*

The Five Books of Moses. A New Translation with Introductions, Commentary, and Notes by Everett Fox and ***Give Us a King! Samuel, Saul, and David. A New Translation of Samuel I and II with an Introduction and Notes*** by Everett Fox (Schocken, $25 and $26 respectively). The purpose of these works is to draw the reader into the world of the Bible through the power of its language—in English dress but with a Hebraic voice. Indebted in many ways to the principles of the German translation of the Old Testament by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, F. translates with an ear to the sound and structure of the original and attempts to reflect its repetitions. Here are a couple of examples: "The

human knew Havva his wife, she became pregnant and bore Kayin. She said: *Kaniti*/ I-have-gotten a man, as has YHWH!" (Gen 4:1). "See now that I, I am he, there is no god beside me; I myself bring-death, bestow-life, I wound and I myself heal, and there is from my hand no rescuing" (Deut 32:29). *EK*

Two recent introductions to Paul's life and theology for general readers are very helpful. Stanley B. Marrow's ***Paul: His Letters and Theology: An Introduction to Paul's Epistles*** (Paulist Press, $19.95) and C. J. den Heyer's ***Paul: A Man of Two Worlds*** (Trinity Press International, $29) both do it well, with strong similarities and some differences. Both restricted themselves to the seven undoubted letters (1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, and Romans). Both place 1 Thessalonians first and Romans last, but they differ in their treatments. Marrow devotes 40 pages to Paul's life, den Heyer 106. Marrow concentrates on the theological content of the letters; den Heyer uses a critical reconstruction of the historical situation in which the letters were written to inform his interpretation. Marrow gives a brief bibliography; den Heyer has no bibliography but significant endnotes to suggest further reading. Each would be a useful addition to a pastor's or a parish library—though I would give the victor's palm to den Heyer. I appreciate his critical historical approach, which makes Paul come alive as a personality in the Early Roman Empire. *EK*

Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters (Abingdon, $20) is an impressive Festschrift in honor of a distinguished Pauline scholar, Victor Furnish, Professor of New Testament at Southern Methodist University. Fifteen American, three British, and two German scholars, outstanding all, concentrate on the relation of ethics and theology in Paul's own letters, in early Christian texts influenced by him, and in modern interpreters: Paul J. Achtemeier, Harold Attridge, William Baird, C. K. Barrett, James D. G. Dunn, Beverly Roberts Gaventa, Richard Hays, Morna Hooker, Leander Keck, Andreas Lindemann, Eduard Lohse, J. Louis Martyn, Wayne Meeks, Schubert Ogden, J. Paul Sampley, Robin Scroggs, D. Moody Smith, Wendell Willis. Many are Methodists, colleagues of Victor Furnish.

To single out any one contributor would be invidious. The book is a rich feast, focusing on key Pauline texts, motifs, the theological framework of Paul's thought and its later appropriation. Vic Furnish produced the seminal study *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, enriched it with *The Love Command in the New Testament*, and wrote one of the best commentaries on 2 Corinthians in print. His works set an agenda for Pauline ethics for a generation. This Festschrift honors him by taking up his own thematics. I wish I could have contributed to it. It deserves wide reading in the academy and the church. *EK*

The church needs understandable guides to the reading of the Bible. The series Reading the New Testament has already shown its worth in the six published volumes. In ***Reading Acts: A Theological and Literary Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*** (Crossroad, $24.95), Charles Talbert, who earlier did volumes on Luke, John, and Corinthians, provides a clear, scholarly interpretation of the book using historical and literary analysis. Talbert uses "succession narratives" from the ancient world and copious references to early Jewish and Greco-Roman literary documents to illuminate the text. With a keen sense he traces the development of the narrative while offering constant suggestions about the significance of the text. He also offers a richer feast of references to ancient Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian texts than do other volumes in this series. An appendix discussing the historicity of the narrative and a lengthy bibliography of works cited in the text conclude the work. This volume should be added to parish libraries and to pastors' resources for teaching and preaching, and it deserves wide use in seminary classrooms. *EK*

Prof. Geza Vermes of Oxford University brings readers up to date on current research and conflicting interpretations in ***An Introduction to the Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*** (Fortress, $18). This update of his introduction, first published in 1977, covers the history of modern research on the scrolls, their authenticity and dating, an excellent description of the documents contained

in them, and three chapters on the community's identity, life, and beliefs. A final chapter summarizes their significance for study of the Old Testament, Pseudepigrapha, and the New Testament. Clear, comprehensive, and judicious, it makes a good addition to a pastor's and a parish library. *EK*

There now is a very welcome reprint of Anthony J. Saldarini's ***Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society*** (Eerdmans, $28). Everyone interested in Judaism in the Early Roman Empire must use this work. James C. VanderKam's brief introduction describes research since the 1988 publication of Saldarini's work and the scholarly reactions to his work (sometimes enthusiastic). Owners of the original edition will need to read this introduction carefully. *EK*

The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha/ Deuterocanonical Books. Edited by Marc Z. Brettler, et al. (Oxford, $45). This study Bible joins a number of others in offering highly competent but brief comments on the text. Competitors include the HarperCollins Study Bible, The Access Bible (Oxford), the Cambridge Annotated Study Bible, and the soon-to-be-released New Interpreter's Study Bible (Abingdon; whose notes will be the longest of all). This Oxford publication beats its predecessor by a full thirty percent more material. The men and women who wrote the notes come from a broad ecumenical spectrum, including many Jewish scholars. A mini-concordance takes up pp. 577–640, and there are also fourteen full-color maps. Maps and diagrams scattered throughout this Bible add to its usefulness. The translation is the NRSV. All of these study Bibles are "must buys" for pastors and church libraries. *RWK*

The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible. By J. David Pleins (Westminster John Knox, $39.95). P. examines the biblical statements about social ethics in the context of Israel's social institutions, the social locations of its main characters, and the struggles for power that are reflected in the biblical texts. Many texts present competing visions centered on questions of land, political leadership, and national survival. Urban and village voices articulate a vision of justice, while these values were tempered by the contrary voice of the elite. Social science methods predominate. The author concludes: "Where the social ethics of the Hebrew Bible is concerned, we are called to bring the text's rich insights to bear on our continued efforts to establish a more just society. This is the burden of torah study, but also its joy." *RWK*

Welcome the reprint of Bruce Metzger's classic ***Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek***, third edition (Baker, $7.99). A new generation of students can increase their grasp of New Testament Greek vocabulary through the use of this book. *EK*

The History of the Second Temple Period. By Paoli Sacchi (Sheffield, $85). This book begins with a substantial preface that updates the issues since the publication of the original in Italian five years previously. The history covered begins with the death of Josiah in 609 B.C.E. and extends to the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. Along the way, P., though quite learned, defends some unusual positions: Deuteronomy is dated to 515, as is Second Isaiah; Sheshbazzar was a vassal king of Judah when Cyrus occupied Babylon; Zerubbabel is the servant in Second Isaiah; the original form of Ezra is that preserved in 1 Esdras. The second half of the book presents themes from "Middle Judaism," defined as the period from 200 B.C.E. to the destruction of the temple, including important discussions of messianism and the afterlife. The translation of the Italian is quite shaky at times, and a three-line quotation from Spinoza in Latin is not translated at all. There are too many sentences like this one: "The Promise is essentially 'Promise of a Covenant, or of the Covenant' and the Covenant only makes sense in light of a promise guaranteeing in some way that if the clauses are respected the benefits foreseen will be realized." *RWK*

The Material Culture of the Bible: An Introduction. By Ferdinand E. Deist (Sheffield, $29.95). At the time of his death D. was a professor in Stellenbosch, South Africa. The manuscript was edited by Robert Carroll, who also died before the book was published. D.

studied how the cultural factors in ancient Israel, such as language, environment, economics, technology, and social and political conditions helped determine the meaning of specific texts. Carroll invites readers to complete the book's argumentation by writing the final chapter for themselves—an indication of the incomplete character of much of the argument. D. insisted that the cultural assumptions and presuppositions of the biblical writers are essential to understanding the text's meaning. D. believed that even though the present text of the Bible was compiled in the post-exilic period, the authors had access to substantial Judean oral and written sources. The sudden death of author and editor—who held quite divergent positions—is deeply lamented. *RWK*

Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History: Origins, Upgrades, Present Text. By Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien (Fortress, $37). This textbook prints out the complete text of the Deuteronomistic History (Dtr) in varied typefaces that enable the student to follow the eight levels that the authors discover in this great historical work. The hypothesis about the Dtr was proposed by Martin Noth in 1943 and is commonly adopted today, but with serious debate about when (pre-exile or exile) and for what reasons this combination of Deuteronomy-Joshua-Judges-Samuel-Kings was composed. C. and O. favor both a pre-exilic first edition and several exilic modifications. They also discover a pre-Deuteronomistic Prophetic Record extending from Saul to Jehu. *RWK*

Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research. Edited by Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Macchi (Sheffield, $95). The centerpiece of this volume of essays is the long and balanced review (pp. 24–141) by P. and R. of research before and since Martin Noth identified the existence of the Deuteronomistic History in 1943 (Dtr; this work consisted of Deuteronomy and Joshua–Kings). Almost every aspect of Noth's proposal has been challenged (date, unity of the work, original purpose, even the very existence of a Deuteronomistic History). The fourteen papers in this book were delivered and discussed between January and June in 1995 in a doctoral seminar sponsored by the Universities of Fribourg, Neuchatel, Lausanne, and Geneva. One of the big surprises is that Steven L. Mckenzie, previously one of the most prominent advocates of a pre-exilic date for Dtr, reversed himself and dated Dtr to the early exile. RWK

Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible. Second Revised Edition. By Emanuel Tov (Fortress, $50). When I reviewed the first edition of this book in the *Journal of Religion,* I wrote that it would soon be viewed as a classic of biblical studies. T. is editor-in-chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project, which under his leadership has nearly completed the publication of all the scrolls at a very rapid pace. Because of these publications and continuing research T. has changed his mind on a number of issues, including the original shape of the biblical text. While much of the information in this book is quite technical, it is well written and accessible to the interested student. Even classics can get better. *RWK*

Reconsidering Israel and Judah. Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History. Edited by Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville (Eisenbrauns, $39.95). The thirty essays in this collection are introduced by K., who has already written a major two- volume work on the subject. The special value of this book is that it presents seminal essays by Martin Noth, Helga Weippert, Hans Walter Wolff, Frank Moore Cross, and Rudolph Smend that have shaped the question for almost everyone else. Ten of the essays were published originally in French, German, Italian, and Spanish but now appear in English for the first time. The scope of the topics treated and the great range in the opinions of the authors place the reader in the dead center of one of the current, great Old Testament debates. *RWK*

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Preaching Helps

The Resurrection of Our Lord—The Day of Pentecost, Series A

Bad Memories and Good News

Sometimes a bad memory is good news. Or at least it sometimes pays benefits. In thinking of this introduction to the Easter issue, I asked myself where I had read a wonderful line that sums up Easter faith in masterful fashion. Here's the line: "In this wide graveyard of the earth, there is one empty tomb."

I did not want to quote it without citing the author and giving chapter and verse. I am sure it was written by Paul Tillich, and I thought I could find it easily either in *The Shaking of the Foundations* or in *The New Being*. These books are collections of sermons, most of which were preached back in the 1940s and 50s at Union Seminary in New York. They are Tillich at his most accessible. They are models of how to speak of profound matters clearly and directly with not a trace of dumbing down.

So I began my quest. Where is that line? Which sermon contains it? I opened the volume on *Shaking the Foundations* and quickly assured myself that I would find it in the sermon called "Born in the Grave" (on Matthew 27:57–66) or in the one on "The Destruction of Death" (on Hebrews 2:14–18). And if not there, then surely in the one with the title "Behold, I am Doing a New Thing" (on Isaiah 43 and Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 11 and Isaiah 65 and Ecclesiastes 1:2, 9–10 and 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Matthew 9:16-17, and last but not least Revelation 21:1–5).

Tillich remembers a story told at the Nüremberg trials of a child born in a grave. Some Jews who had escaped from the gas chambers had fled the camp and taken up hiding in a cemetery, literally living in graves. One day an 80-year-old gravedigger wrapped in a linen shroud assisted a young woman as she gave birth to a child. When the newborn uttered its first cry, the old man cried out, "Great God, have you finally sent us the Messiah? Who but the Messiah can be born in a grave?" Tillich goes on in sensitive fashion to speak of the tomb of Jesus as the real end of his life and work before it became the place from which new life rises up. Christ had to be buried, he says, in order to

become the Christ, that is, the one who conquers death. The new life would not really be new if it did not arise from a tomb, from the complete end of the old life.

In "The Destruction of Death" Tillich says that we become slaves of fear, not because we have to die but because we deserve to die, because we are guilty, guilty of having separated from the Eternal. The Christian message, he says, is realistic and knows that we have to die. And, he writes, "Within Christianity there is only one 'argument' against death: the forgiveness of sins." And that "argument" is rooted in the coming of the Eternal One to us. The Eternal became temporal and mortal for our sake, sharing our flesh and blood and "destroying the one who had the power of death, namely the devil" (Hebrews 2).

In "I am Doing a New Thing" Tillich speaks to us from a time much like our own: "We are in the desert of which the prophet speaks (Isaiah 43:19), and none among us knows the way out." We don't know the way to newness, we can't invent it, we don't control it. But we can receive it as a gift. "Behold, *I (God!)* am doing a new thing, even now it is springing to light. Do you not perceive it?" That word "perceive" reminds us that the new thing is mysterious and by no means obvious. It is not just some piece of the old and not even some fresh combination of old things.

"Nothing," says Tillich, "is more surprising than the rise of the new within ourselves. . . . The new being is born in us, just when we least believe in it. . . . Suddenly we notice it within us! The new which we sought and longed for comes to us in the moment in which we lose hope of ever finding it. That is the first thing we must say about the new: it appears when and where it chooses." And he continues by speaking of the sudden rise of the new within our inner being but in our historical situation, its sudden appearance in some dark corner of our world, perhaps in the depth of some national catastrophe (where people of perception might glimpse the new) or at the height of a national triumph (where some few might be able to perceive the vanity of which Ecclesiastes speaks).

At the end of the sermon on the "New Thing," Tillich writes that Jesus "deprived himself of everything which can become old, of all individual and social standing and greatness, experience and power. He surrendered all these in his death and showed in his self-surrender the only new thing which is eternally new: love." And he reminds us of Paul's declaration: "Love never ends." Love, says Tillich, "is the power of the new. . . . It cannot age; it removes guilt and curse. It is working even today toward new creation." He concludes by repeating the prophet's question, "Do you not perceive it?"

What do we perceive in the events of our days? A friend in a letter this past Christmas told of hearing a pastor who had visited Ground Zero in Lower

Manhattan. That place, said the pastor, struck her as holy ground. Why holy? Because so many souls had passed there suddenly from this world to a world beyond. Ground hallowed by the deaths of many. In Jerusalem long ago one Person's tomb became holy ground, for it is the place where God cast off the iron grip of death and created a sudden opening between the old world and God's new world. Light shines from that tomb.

Back to Tillich. I searched for it, but I never did find the place where Tillich wrote, "In this wide graveyard of the earth there is one empty tomb." I both was and was not disappointed. My quest led me to spend some time with those seminary sermons delivered a half century ago. The time spent with them was moving and nurturing. So my defective memory, sad as it is, still paid me big dividends.

I have heard preachers say, and I guess I have said it myself, that the hardest days to preach are the great festivals, like Christmas and Easter. Many things make those days difficult, I suppose. Some people show up with such high expectations. And others come thinking of the festival church services as spectacle, as a kind of holiday show that they wouldn't want to miss, a way of marking the season. Many are present in the congregation for one of their two or three annual doses of religion. Total strangers wander in off the street. Visitors fill many normally empty spaces in the pews. Are they seekers? What draws them?

And yet I think that what makes preaching really hard is the immensity of the events we wish to celebrate and articulate. What words could ever suffice? The sheer size of the incarnation or resurrection puts to shame our efforts at speech.

How grateful I am for the scriptures and the liturgy and the hymns of the church. Even if my words can never capture Christmas or encapsulate Easter, these other words from the past many centuries, good words of prophets and poets, will touch the minds and hearts of worshippers and bring them the sustenance we want them to have. And if I cannot find in myself the power to fashion fitting words, then I am grateful that people like Paul Tillich thought long and hard on these matters and left us their meditations on the printed page.

And month by month I am grateful to preachers like the **Rev. Jean Lebbert**. From October 1992 to November 2001 Jean was one of the two pastors at Emanuel Lutheran Church in Lodi, California. She is now taking a sabbatical. She says she is behind in her reading and outdated in computer skills, and she wants to remedy that situation. Her far-flung ministry of storytelling will continue, as she is frequently called on to lead Bible studies for all kinds of organizations: conventions and gatherings of the women of the ELCA, of the

Parish Nurse organization, of the La Leche League, and many others, male and female, in congregations and out. I had the pleasure of being in the audience when Jean held a large group of us at the seminary absolutely spellbound as she told and retold numerous biblical stories in the most inventive ways I have ever experienced.

Jean has written for *Preaching Helps* in the past, and I hope I can keep track of her in the days ahead and bend her arm to write again in the future. I thank her for sharing her gifts with us in these pages, as we prepare to celebrate and articulate the many meanings and dimensions of the New Creation in Jesus Christ.

Yours,

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The Resurrection of Our Lord March 31, 2002

Acts 10:34–43 or Jeremiah 31:1–6
Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24
Colossians 3:1–4 or Acts 10:34–43
John 20:1–18 or Matthew 28:1–10

First Reading

I write this a month after the events of the terrorist attacks and the beginning of the bombing in Afghanistan. So much horror to see and believe. I wonder if it was more horrible watching three men die on those crosses outside the city wall and then realizing who the middle one was? Those witnesses went on to spread the news that horror doesn't get the last word. Will we catch the hope of Easter and let the Spirit blow us to God's kingdom come through Jesus Christ?

From Bishop Mattheis' September 2001 report to the Sierra Pacific Synod Council: "In this time of crisis people feel vulnerable. They are open to hearing good news about a God who is with us and for us, a God who will meet us in the future and who has, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, brought us to a place where we might dare to act as agents of healing, compassion, and reconciliation. This is not about building numbers. It is about sharing something good. It is about being equipped to share the wonderful gift of love and hope that sets us free from fear to live as servants to one another in this world, in the here and now. So, begin to put those strategies in place. Gather resources. Pray. Study the scriptures and envision being the community of faith we encounter in the book of Acts, the community of faith we are through our baptism."

If we listen to Acts only as it is presented in the Lectionary, as a person in the pew does, we cannot understand its story. As we listen to Acts being read to us during Easter, this is what we hear: a chunk of speech (March 31), a chunk of speech (April 7), a chunk of speech (April 14), everybody being really good to each other (April 21), everybody getting mad and killing somebody (April 28), a chunk of speech (May 5), the story of Jesus' ascension (finally a whole story, but folks might not hear it because the church service is on Thursday), the second half of the ascension story ending with a list of names (April 12), and, finally, the Pentecost story concluded by a chunk of Old Testament (May 19). However, when the pericopes are returned to their context, which can be done in proclamation, Acts' rich themes emerge, and we see the motivations for the speeches, and they touch hearers' hearts once again.

The excitement of Easter Sunday and the familiarity of the Gospel texts overshadow the Acts pericope. Yet the story of Acts reflects the immediate response to the resurrection event that fueled the early Christian church. Peter's enthusiasm is that the gospel message of salvation is available for all who are vulnerable: open and hopin'.

This week's scene provides a prototype for all who encounter God and believe. Cornelius is a nonbeliever, a Roman Gentile, but he acts on the touch of God he receives in a vision and steps out in faith to confess his belief in the Jews' Messiah-made-flesh. Peter is a believer, a Jew, but he acts on the touch of God he receives in a vision and steps out in faith to baptize a Gentile in the name of the same Messiah. Are Israelites and Gentiles being mixed up in a new chaos from which God will do new acts of creation?

God's agents are the principal actors in the readings. In John, Jesus appears to Mary, calls her by name, tells her what to do.

In Matthew, God's angel spokesperson rolls the stone away and tells the women what's happened and what to do next. "Peter began to speak" is literally "these words came into Peter's mouth," which implies that the Holy Spirit put them there. Jesus' followers are mixed in with faithless Israelites, foreign Gentiles, and even with the psalmist (by the way, even though it's not included in the pericope today, v. 8 of the psalm happens to be the center of the entire Bible; someone besides whoever it was who calculated that information might be delighted to know), and all are looking to God for reason to live. The people in the Scriptures act upon the acts of God they see. Will we?

Pastoral Reflections

"You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

Whether it is wonderful or horrible, spectacular or disappointing, a lot or a little, if it is punctuated with the promise, "You ain't seen nothin' yet!" you get moved from present moment to realm of possibility.

In today's Gospel, you see people see things: a mysteriously moved boulder, deserted shrouds in the tomb, angels, the dead alive. And, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! In Christ, God shows no partiality. The Christ of the whole world died for the whole world's sins and rose to save the whole world.

Acts acts out the amazing glory of Easter. A Gentile sees and believes. Peter's appetite is whetted for a formerly forbidden feast. As he baptizes the Gentile and his household, Peter dies to old life under the law and rises to new life. Yet, hadn't Jesus prepared this way? "Whoever believes in me, even though they die, yet shall they live." And, say, hadn't God promised this would happen a long, long time ago? Remember? "Through you all nations will call me blessed."

Creation committed its most horrible sin in crucifying the Creator but by doing so perfected the Creator's plan! The sin becomes forgiven as the means of grace. Whoa!

And now our lives are hidden with Christ in God and will be revealed with Christ in glory. Honestly, we ain't seen nothin' yet!

And yet the Law fulfilled must be,
or we were lost forever;
Therefore God sent his Son that he
might us from death deliver.
He all the Law for us fulfilled,
and thus his Father's anger stilled
Which over us impended.

—*LBW* #297, stanza 3

From Jean's Journal

Misc. thought: The biggest absurdity about God is that he works so hard to get us to come to the place he created for us in the first place. [Sorry about the "he." I jotted this thought before I was much aware of inclusive language—wonder where that will lead us!]

"I shall die, but that is all I will do for death." —Maya Angelou, speaking at UC Davis on 2/27/01.

"Living is a subject that is limitless and worthy of celebration." —Martha Stewart

Second Sunday of Easter
April 7, 2002

Acts 2:14a, 22–32
Psalm 16
1 Peter 1:3–9
John 20:19–31

First Reading

The first body of Christ, a mere roomful gathered by the Christ/Man, is ashen and stone still. Witnesses with clay feet. Then the Christ/God breathes into them. It's creation of co-creator all over again.

The author of Luke-Acts writes carefully. Rarely used words and phrases help us achieve some powerful insights. This is the only time, for example, that the breathing word ἐμφυσάω appears in the New Testament. In the Septuagint, it's the word used in Genesis when God breathes clay to life and the word used when Ezekiel sees the breath of God animating all those dry bones. Pretty significant breathing moments.

Note the turn of events: last week the seers were blessed; this week there's blessing for those who don't see. Those "those" are we. Verse 31 of John 20 tears open the proscenium of the Gospel's stage and pulls us in: "These things are written so that you [i.e., we] may believe."

Instead of the Nicene or Apostles' Creed today, how about having the congregation confess using Peter's creed-like homily, verses 22b–32, from Acts? Some will be afraid, no doubt, to use something different for the creed.

The thrust of Peter's argument is that God is going to protect God's honor as promised. The priestly clan think that Jesus dishonored God. The disciples claim that it is the priests who dishonor God by rejecting God's agents. Either way, God's honor is challenged. The reading from 1 Peter sustains our hope that something glorious is still ahead. All we have to do is survive the fires of persecution or theophanies or disease or dread or temptation or. . . .

Pastoral Reflections

Here is a gem from my journal. I found it in a newsletter of Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in San Jose, California, and it's handy for addressing fires and fears:

Some time ago, a few ladies met to study the scriptures. While reading the third chapter of Malachi, they came upon the expression in the third verse, "And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

One lady offered to visit a silversmith and report what the smith said about the subject. [Jean's note—wow, what a great lady to have in a Bible study group!] She went accordingly, and without telling the object of her errand, asked the silversmith to tell her about the process of refining silver.

After he had fully described it to her, she asked, "But, sir, do you sit while the work of refining is going on?"

"Oh yes, Madam," replied the silversmith, "I must sit with my eye steadily fixed on the furnace, for if the time necessary for refining is exceeded in the slightest degree, the silver will be injured."

The lady at once saw the beauty, and comfort too, of the expression, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." God's eye is steadily intent on us as we endure the work of purifying, and wisdom and love are both engaged in the best manner for us. Our trials do not come at random, and God will not let us be tested beyond what we can endure. [Jean again: Excuse me, but could I please have this lady in *my* Bible classes?]

Before she left, the lady asked one final question: "When do you know the process is complete?"

"Why, that is quite simple," replied the silversmith. "When I can see my own image

in the silver, the refining process is finished."

Prayer of the Day
Gracious God, thank you for creating us in your image and for giving each of us the measure of faith we need. You know us, God. You know our doubts and dreads. We ask that you would help us see you, each in the way we need to, so that we will trust you above all things and in all things and give you glory in all that we do.

Third Sunday of Easter
April 14, 2002

Acts 2:14a, 36–41
Psalm 116:1–4, 12–19
1 Peter 1:17–23
Luke 24:13–35

First Reading
Peter arises to address a faceless, eclectic crowd of locals, foreigners, and tourists gathered together for an annual festival. The content of his speech is similar to the Cornelius speech in Acts 10. Some of the crowd are cut to the heart. New believers step out of the crowd and become a *koinonia* community. In Creation's dance, chaos whirls around and then becomes community.

Both sacraments are woven into the lustrous fabric of our readings. Christ is revealed in the breaking of bread on the road to Emmaus. The question that kicks off Peter's speech is about wine—"Are these people drunk on new wine?"

The crowds react to Peter's sermon. Some sneer (you can't put new wine in old wineskin attitudes). Some are "cut to the heart," literally, "stabbed to the heart." This is the only place this verb occurs in the New Testament, and the physical aspect of the root word (νύσσω, to prick) reminds me of circumcision (titter) and of Jeremiah's image of uncircumcised hearts (Jer 9:26). The believers are stabbed to the heart; they are cut both by their belief in Jesus and also by regret over their rejection of Jesus.

The answer to the crowd's question "What shall we do?" is the same as John the Baptist had preached and Jesus had said in his farewell. Peter answered, "Repent and be baptized." A better translation for repent would be "Turn away from your sins," which is more the Hebrew idea of repentance. The Greek idea is more like "change your mind." The Latin idea of repentance is to "feel sorry for your sins." However, I am intrigued that the Hebrew word for repentance is a breathing word. It varies by one letter from the breath word in Genesis 2:7 that God used to breathe the clay to life; this word means to blast or explode. The breath word for repentance means to continue breathing.

When we do significant breathing things, we need to be reminded to breathe. For example, the job of the birthing coach during labor is to remind the mama to breathe. The main task of an aerobics instructor is to remind the huffers and puffers to breathe. If one is going to step out of the seeming safety of the masses into the vulnerability of individuality, they're going to have to take a deep breath and keep breathing.

Pastoral Reflections
For a good minute at least, Jesus must have just stood there, staring at Cleopas. (This name, by the way, means "glory of the father"—so, is this like Jesus looking into a literally dim mirror?) Cleopas and the other traveler had pretty much accurately related events to Jesus and (a) were unable to put two and two together and (b) didn't have a clue they were talking to the one they were talking about! We're not told in v. 16 who is keeping their eyes from seeing, but with

Jesus' reply, we get the idea that it is self-inflicted blindness—as is a lot of the blindness that the Bible talks about.

Finally Jesus says, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe."

There was some kind of commotion among Jesus' followers—sounded like wind or something—and then all these scraggly Galileans started speaking, and people didn't notice at first but then it became conspicuously evident that every single person in the eclectic pilgrimage crowd was comprehending what was being said. Of course, everyone began to squirm, like they had missed something and so they were never going to understand. A murmur slithered through the throng: "The Galileans are drunk. New wine has loosened their tongues." And people started to accept that as the explanation, discounting what they had personally experienced. A voice rose over the drone, and it was strong and eloquent, with the edge of confidence that everybody had just so willingly sacrificed to a rumor. It all just makes your heart ache, or beat, it's hard to tell the difference. "The promise is for you, for your children, for everyone whom God calls." It's like, Don't discount yourself. Stand up and be counted, by God!

The resurrection of the Christ really gets to the heart of the matter.

From Jean's Journal

"The idea that one could give life to someone in the pew by what one says goes against the grain in today's relativistic world."

—Gracia Grindal

Fourth Sunday of Easter
April 21, 2002

Acts 2:42–47
Psalm 23
1 Peter 2:19–25
John 10:1–10

First Reading

The Pentecost event in this week's Acts pericope concludes with a crowd of believers coming together. This being Good Shepherd Sunday, we might think of the naïve believers as being as gullible as sheep, still depending on a shepherd to lead them to green pastures. Sheep can be distracted by tufts of green pastures and stray away into the peril of isolation from the flock or the shepherd. The Epistle reading reminds us that it is a dangerous risk to step out of the flock. John beckons the comfortable and the discomforted to rely on Jesus' words, "I am the door to the sheep gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved."

In Acts, the "fellowship" word κοινωνία is exuberantly emphasized by pairs of words that describe the action: "devoted to teaching and fellowship and breaking bread and praying," and all of it was done "with glad and generous hearts, day by day."

It is interesting that "breaking of bread" actually only occurs twice in the New Testament, here and in Luke 24:35, yet it has come to symbolize this fullness and fellowship. Was it so common that there was little need to bother mentioning it?

All of the people shared *all* the activities *all* the days! This echoes the surrounding context of *all* languages, *all* nations, *all* who are amazed and perplexed, and the Spirit extravagantly poured out on *all* flesh. The gift of the Spirit to all flesh, not just to the few chosen, is the sign of the Messianic age. It's Creation all over again! Uh-oh!

Pastoral Reflections
Here lies the origin of all those logistical problems that plague the church still!

However will we baptize 3,000 people? Is that 3,000 inclusive, or not counting women and children? I guess sprinkling will have to do.

If 3,000 are baptized and they all come together at once, where will they all sit? Quick, hire pew builders! Organize a Property Board!

With 3,000 in Bible class, and no printing press or photocopy machine, we need a really big Dry-Erase papyrus—or should we take Jesus' example and get into a boat, sail out onto a lake, and take advantage of natural acoustics? Quick, organize a car pool! Maybe we need to buy a van and hire a driver. We need a Stewardship Board.

Oh, no! There'll be 3,000 for dinner? Quick, organize a Fellowship Board; scavenge people's old silverware . . . and where's Jesus' recipe for Tuna Fish Sandwiches for 5,000? Baa. Baaaaaaa.

It's going to take a lot of money to organize all of this stuff. Quick, plan a budget. Better coerce—er, I mean, recruit—people for evangelism; we need more members if we're going to meet this budget! Baaaaaa. There's a new couple coming in over there; somebody greet them. What are their names? Ananias and Sapphira? What? They enjoy working with budgets! Well, well, (baaaaaaa), the Lord does provide!

From Jean's Journal: "God breathed us to life and said, 'Go. Live (i.e., Love).' Simple as that. Then in flood the excuses: 'That's okay if you're politically free and economically mobile and walking in a safe neighborhood and have your health and as long as everybody else plays by the same rules. . . .' We have more faith in the validity of our excuses than in the promise of the gospel." —From a letter I wrote to Margie Brown

Fifth Sunday of Easter
April 28, 2002

Acts 7:55–60
Psalm 31:1–5, 15–16
1 Peter 2:2–10
John 14:1–14

First Reading
The Lectionary assumes a great deal of biblical knowledge on the part of congregants in extracting this tidbit from Acts, this story about the first Christian martyr. I guess we don't count Jesus as a martyr, even though he came to bear witness, or Judas, who in the end got hung up by his convictions.

If you didn't know this Acts story before you came to church today, you wouldn't know who the "he" in the story was. You might even jump to the conclusion that "he" stood by praying and having a vision while some other guy named Stephen got stoned to death! And, if you had come to church last week and were able to remember the Acts reading (now there's an assumption), you might wonder what happened to that loving, listening, *koinonia* community who now turn on somebody with such viciousness.

Stephen emerges from the seven commissioned to wait tables so that the apostles could be free for the work of preaching. The Hellenist ethnic group are claiming unfair sharing of resources and racist attitudes, as their group's widows are being ignored. Given an inch, Stephen takes it upon himself to preach like an actual apostle. As the Spirit rushes through him, the crowd rushes in on him; even the verb used is "to crowd." The crowd crowds in on him, and then the crowd turns into a mob, which turns and stones the speaker. Tough preaching day.

Here we have mob violence rather than the carrying out of the law. The crowd are

holding their ears and gnashing their teeth; they cover their ears to avoid defilement by even hearing blasphemous things, then they cast him out and stone him. This is the same order of events that we see in Jesus' execution. And Stephen's last words, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59) and "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60), clearly echo Jesus' own final words in Luke's narrative (Luke 23:34,46a). Stephen even dies like Jesus: "He said this and he died" sounds very much like Luke 23:46b

Pastoral Reflections

Shh! If you listen, you can pick out voices in the crowd.

"Stephen was obnoxiously bold! We couldn't stand his smart-alecky spirit. We all glared at him, some started stirring up the crowd by making up lies about him, and some got scared because his face was so wild. He just kept shouting at us, not about our great story of Israel's history, but about God's Spirit at work in spite of our history!"

Stephen: "Give me an 'S'—Story!"

"Stop him! Somebody stop him! Who is this Stephen guy? He's not a *real* apostle; he's just one of those Greek-speakers who whine that their old ladies aren't getting enough of the food. Okay, so the apostles commissioned some of them to do the grunt work while they did the important things, preaching and teaching, but right away this one shoots off his mouth as if he's a real apostle now, too."

Stephen: "Give me a 'P'—Prophecies!"

"He's preaching and prophesying, and look, now he says he's peering into heaven, seeing the heavens open, seeing someone standing at God's right hand! This is blasphemy!"

Stephen: "Give me an 'I'—Idolatry!"

"Insults! He said we've always been idolaters, that we are the ones who received God's law but that we've never really kept it! Cover your ears! Shout out loud so we don't have to hear his blasphemy! Let's mob him, and drag him out of the city!"

Stephen: "Give me an 'R'—Rebellion!"

"Rocks! Hand me some of those rocks! Stone him! He said that God does not dwell in houses made by human hands and that Solomon never should have built the temple! God gave Solomon the rocks, but now God gives *us* these rocks!"

Stephen: "Give me an 'I'—Initiative!"

"But listen, everybody! This is nothing new! Isaiah said it, so long ago! Remember? "Israel! What kind of house will you build for me?" says the LORD. "Where is the place of my rest?"

Stephen: "Lord, don't hold this sin against them."

"Stop! Somebody stop them!"

Stephen: "Give me a 'T'—Turn your hearts of stone into hearts of flesh!"

"We all just roared over his shouting!"

Stephen: "Lord, receive my Spirit!"

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 5, 2002

Acts 17:22–31
Psalm 66:8–20
1 Peter 3:13–22
John 14:15–21

First Reading

Paul pushes people's pieties. To believe that Jesus was the righteous One given for all of the unrighteous, and that the waters of baptism could wipe out sin, pushes Pharisees and Sadducees to bend their belief that righteousness could only be obtained by strict adherence to the law. Stoics and Epicureans, educated Greeks, are also challenged to leave behind their mythology and accept that one God, above all gods, intervened in history (incarnation) and against the natural order (resurrection).

The vague way that Paul tells the Athenians that they are "extremely religious" could be taken as a positive connotation, but it can also be a superstitious connotation as if they are addicted to worship of gods. This is a clever ploy on Paul's part for time and attention, as his audience doesn't know whether Paul is praising them or insulting them until later in the speech. It was said in Paul's time that it was easier to walk down the streets of Athens and meet a god than to meet a human being. The Greeks were afraid of offending the gods by failing to give them attention; so they covered any omission by the label "unknown god." One who did not know which god to thank could set up an altar and pray to an unknown god, the way consumers buy lottery tickets.

The Stoics are like "Pharisees" of the Athenians because, as Pharisees believed that Jews achieved righteousness by adhering to the law, Stoics believed that to achieve righteousness, human beings needed to suppress all fleshly passion and desire, muster self-sufficiency, and accept all things as the unavoidable result of divine will or natural order. Stoics believed that all people seek God, that they instinctively grope for God, and that all find their being in God. "Live and move and have our being" may reflect a Hellenist poem, attributed to Epimenides, although the idea isn't lacking in Judaism. "An ancient scribal tradition taught that the Law contains not 2 or 10 but no less than 613 commandments. Some pious meditations then divided the 613 into 365 prohibitions (one for each day of the year) and 248 positive commands (one for each bone in the body), vividly and memorably declaring the Law's comprehensive application to all our times and all our movements" (Robert H. Smith, *Matthew* [Augsburg, 1989], 265). Righteousness for the Stoics, just as for the Pharisees, was an obligatory path, not a gift of strength, granted to enhance life. Paul insults the Stoics, saying, "God has overlooked the times of human ignorance. Now He commands all people everywhere to repent." Stoics believed humans come to God, God does not come to humans. Incarnation—God appointing a mediator—insults a Stoic.

The Epicureans are the "Sadducees" of the Athenians, also rejecting any concept of life after death. They were devoted to the pursuit of pleasure, of good food, comfort, ease. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." By Paul's time the Epicurean school had degenerated into a more sensual system of thought, losing their original notion that the supreme good is true happiness, not just temporary gratification. One seeks pleasure and happiness because fulfillment and righteousness are in the here and now, not in an afterlife. The Epicureans had moved in to hear what Paul was saying because "He preached of Jesus and the resurrection" (v. 18). The Greek word for

resurrection is ἀνάστασις, which seems to have been understood by the Greeks to be the name of a goddess. The Epicureans move in to hear about the pleasure and happiness of a male and female deity, "Jesus and Anastasis." When they realize Paul is talking about Jesus rising from the dead, a concept they do not accept, they are outraged.

Pastoral Reflections
My sister Janet and I have been visiting a community where ELCA Lutherans are attempting to congregate with Episcopalians, primarily because both groups are small in this small community. By joining together, the two congregations can pool resources. In worship, the more significant mass bolsters hymn singing; visitors feel more comfortable when there are 40 to 50 gathered, instead of 10 to 12. We all know the reasonings.

The problem is that their conversation is dominated by "*We* like such and such, but *they* do so and so." And the musak of the *CCM* hovers like a dirge played for a funeral. One time, Janet leaned over and whispered wisely, "These people need to turn 'We-They' into 'The Way.'"

We've been doing this we-they dance for a long, long time. Paul is doing it in Athens. Last week, we recalled when a Hellenist was mobbed and stoned to death because he claimed he was dancing with Israel's God. Jesus was always ruffling feathers when he fandangoed with the riff-raff. A lot of people died when God's people waltzed into and in the Promised Land—still are. God sent plagues when Pharaoh wouldn't allow the hora in Egypt. Wonder if it goes back to square one? "Adam! Eve! Where are you? Wanna dance?" "Can't! Ain't got nothin' to wear!"

And the beat goes on, for us good Christians, for us Americans. How will we read First Peter today? "Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated." Which will it be, dance or die? Will it always be one or the other?

From Jean's Journal
"The Catechism is often recited instead of resounded. Everybody is saved; they just can't live with each other." —Martin Marty at the 1993 Spring Theological Conference at PLTS.

The Ascension of Our Lord
May 9, 2002

Acts 1:1–11
Psalm 47 or Psalm 93
Ephesians 1:15–23
Luke 24:44–53

First Reading
Why should we celebrate Ascension Thursday? Because, as we have spent the Sundays after Easter considering the progression and setbacks of the church after the Jesus event, Ascension allows us a welcome visit with Jesus once again. It's a chance for us to hear his powerful words and promises and to witness his glorious ascension, which occurred before the eyes of witnesses, unlike the resurrection.

Perhaps God knows we need to see Jesus rise to heaven more than we need to see him return from hell and death! Ascension also allows us to encounter for ourselves the dilemma of the disciples' question, "Now are you going to do something important?" and the angels' rebuke, "Why are you standing around looking up?"

It's interesting that, so far in the book of Acts and during the Sundays of Easter, all

the disciples have not yet been named. Their being named on Ascension serves to bring them down to earth. They come down from the ethereal Mount of Olives, come into the city (earthiness), and go upstairs (their own ascension into power) to a room where they are named individually and reach the pivotal point: now are *we* going to do something? This is the essential question that Ascension should bring to us every year.

Pastoral Reflections

Ascension gives us a feeling of coming full circle. Jesus, come to earth, now returns to heaven. He came in stark human meekness, as a defenseless newborn laid to sleep in a feed trough. During his life and ministry, he gave his all in compassionate ministry and astounding teaching, only to be betrayed by one of his best friends, humiliated, cruelly executed by his religious authorities, and laid to rest in a borrowed tomb. His resurrection was not witnessed, and his post-resurrection appearances were met and recounted with as much doubt as joy. Sometimes, those who knew him didn't even recognize him.

But now, before the eyes of those who knew him best, Jesus is robed in the clouds of the heavens and is taken away, like Elijah. Jesus departs the earth in the victory of mystery, unable to be lost and forgotten in the annals of history.

From Jean's Journal

"Millennial children ask, 'Wuzupgod?'

—Notes from 1999 Synod Assembly

Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 12, 2002

Acts 1:6–14
Psalm 68:1–10, 32–35
1 Peter 4:12–14, 5:6–11
John 17:1–11

First Reading

In Acts today, the apostles are standing around wondering what to do. Hear them murmuring as they stand gazing up: "Did you catch it when he said that Holy Spirit thing would be happening?"

"No, did you?"

"I asked you first."

"What do you want to do now?"

"I don't know; what do you want to do now?"

"I don't know; I asked you first."

First Peter and John also address bewilderment, first of the suffering church and then of the disciples hiding in the Upper Room. All work together to prepare us for Pentecost next Sunday.

"Beloved," Peter pens, "do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you." That part echoes the angels' rebuke to the disciples, "Why are you standing around looking up?" Peter continues, ". . . after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you." That is parallel to the words, "Go and wait in Jerusalem until God clothes you with power."

In the Gospel reading for today, Jesus prays for his disciples, prays that they'll catch the Holy Spirit thing. It's coming. Tune in next week—same time, same sanctuary.

Pastoral Reflections

Jesus went to the cool garden with a heavy heart. He thought of his disciples, the ones he had taught to pray. He thought about feeding all the people with bread and fish. He thought about being tempted once to be their king.

Ah! To be king here. Wouldn't that be great? Just think how good the world would be if he were the king.

Then he thought about why God had sent him. *God so loved the world that he sent the only Son so that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life.*

And Jesus thought about what was coming next.

The people would make him king—but only to make fun of him. They would make him king and mock him. Funny. They'd do the right thing for the wrong reason. Wouldn't be the alpha time, or the omega.

Because they would close their eyes and stop up their ears to the truth of God's great love. And Jesus, the king, would open his hands to all who believed, and the people would nail his hands to a cross, and the king would die.

Jesus went into a cool garden with a heavy heart, and he knelt down and prayed.

God, I'm ready to do it. Make it glorious. People will be watching.

People will be afraid.

God! I'm counting on you! Please, do your part too. So people will talk about me—and you. And believe in us!

And so they'll pray when they need to.

The Day of Pentecost
May 19, 2002

Acts 2:1–21 or Numbers 11:24–30
Psalm 104:24–34, 35b
1 Corinthians 12:3b–13 or Acts 2:1–21
John 20:19–23 or John 7:37–39

First Reading

Every year, our Lectionary visit to Acts ends with Pentecost; the next time we hear from this biblical tome will be next January, on the Sunday of our Lord's Baptism. In the whirlwind of Acts this year, we have been hearing speeches and staring at reactions of crowds. Pentecost Sunday bids us stop staring ("Why do you stand staring?"), step out of the crowd of readers, define our faith, and enter the story.

Other readings for the day also propel us onward. In Numbers, Eldad and Medad, outside of the select, also receive the gift of prophecy—nice tie to the Cornelius pericope we heard on Easter. John 7 (an option today) is a story of Jesus at a Pentecost festival and includes a reference to Isaiah 44:3, prophesying the outpouring of the Spirit. John 20 revisits the resurrected Christ breathing on the locked-up disciples.

Jews came annually to Jerusalem to celebrate the ancient festival of Pentecost. Through Jewish history, the festival had changed shape, transforming from the Festival of the Feast of the Grain Harvest to a celebration of the gift of the Law. Jewish tradition holds that Moses received the Law on Mt. Sinai seven weeks and a day after the Passover; that's why it's called Pentecost (meaning "fifty"). With the Jesus event, with the new Passover, this significant holiday was to take on new significance again.

Pastoral Reflections

Pentecost kicks off the remaining one-half of our church year, during which we will not hear another reading from Acts; we won't hear the story of what happened to the disciples after Pentecost! Why?

Maybe we're supposed to continue the story, not sit around in the pews staring at it. Maybe Acts acts as *our* rebuking messenger. Possibly Pentecost is supposed to be an event, not merely an anniversary.

I have the privilege of being a synod communicator to *The Lutheran*. Part of the job involves perusing parish newsletters. I've only been doing the job for a year, so I still don't know exactly what I'm doing; however, I do know that I like to see the bigger picture, and this provides one of those opportunities.

So here's the point. I have been reading *all* of the monthly newsletters of *all* the parishes in my synod *all* year, and, frankly, I am afraid that, for the most part, we are celebrating anniversaries, not living transforming spiritual events. Christmas comes and goes. Easter comes and goes. Pentecost comes and goes. Pastors and members come and go. Entire congregations come and go! We're, all of us, begging for folks to attend Bible studies, serve on committees, teach Sunday School, increase their giving. We're laboring harder at "doing church" than we are at "making disciples."

Pentecost is touted as being the birthday of the church. There are only two birthdays mentioned in the entire Bible, and both birthdays find God's people in prison! How about this year we make Pentecost not the birthday but the new birth of the church! We are people of Christ's resurrection. What if, church wide, we free ourselves from ineffective and antiquated tasks and traditions, open our hearts and calendars and pocketbooks and church doors, and let the Holy Spirit clothe us?

The word used to describe what 3,000 things were transformed at Pentecost in Acts is "souls." The word in Greek is *psyche*, which means "soul" or "breath of life." What can we do this Pentecost, to let God catch our breath and cut our hearts down to the soul? I believe that darkness can be overcome, but to do it, we've got to flick the switch!

From Jean's Journal

"You don't need a leader if the boat's anchored." —Prof. Jane Strohl

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Responses *are welcome!*

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