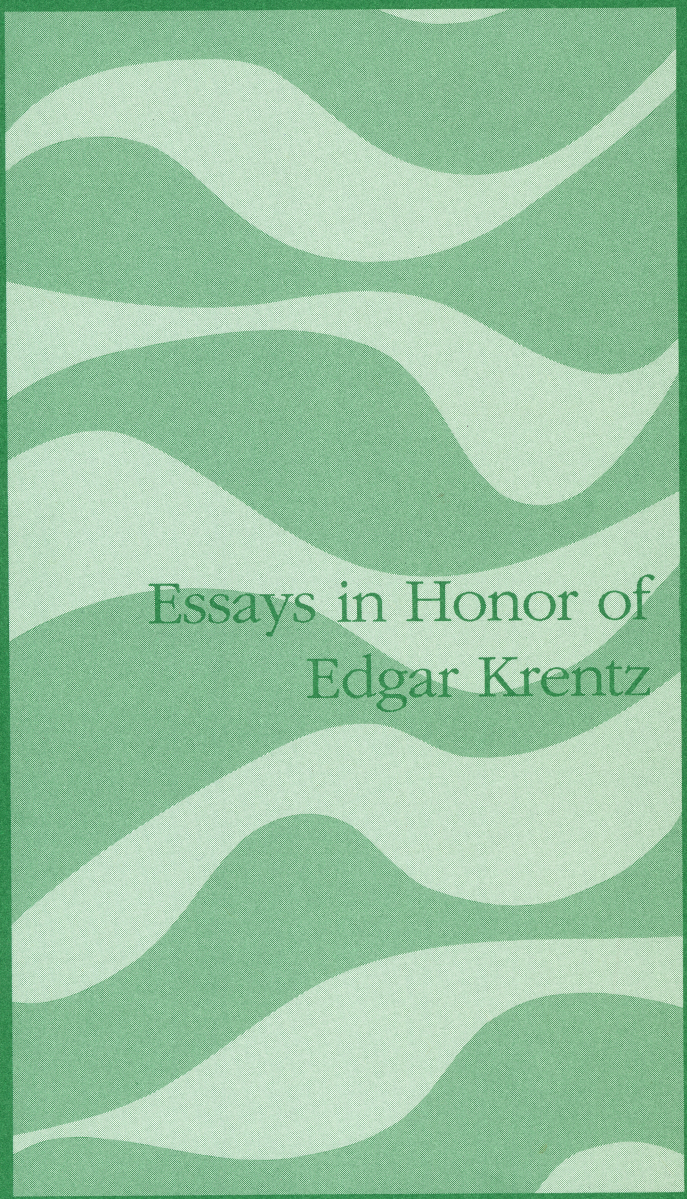
June 1998 Volume 25 Number 3



Essays in Honor of Edgar Krentz

CURRENTS

in Theology and Mission

Currents

in Theology and Mission

Published by
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

in cooperation with
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Wartburg Theological Seminary

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CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION (ISSN: 0098-2113) is published bimonthly (every other month), February, April, June, August, October, December. Annual subscription rate: $15.00 in the U.S.A., $20.00 elsewhere. Two-year rate: $29.00 in the U.S.A., $39.00 elsewhere. Three-year rate: $42.00 in the U.S.A., $57.00 elsewhere. Published by Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, a non-profit organization, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60615, to which all business correspondence is to be addressed. Printed in U.S.A.

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

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

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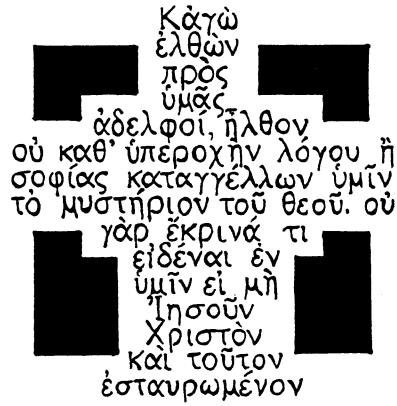
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Essays in Honor of Edgar Krentz

Edgar Krentz began teaching forty-five years ago, at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In 1975 he joined the faculty of Christ Seminary–Seminex, forty-five colleagues who had refused to buckle under the attack on biblical criticism and the freedom of the gospel led by officials of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. Since 1983, he has been Christ Seminary–Seminex Professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. In addition to being a professor, spouse, and parent, Ed Krentz has been a librarian, an archaeologist, the NT book review editor for *Currents*, and a member of ecclesiastical commissions of various sorts

A few weeks ago I joked that Ed has forgotten more Greek than most of us have learned, only to be corrected by David Rhoads, who rightly observed that Ed has forgotten none of it. Trained in the classics at Washington University, Ed is a master of bibliography, a polyhistor (a word practically invented for him), and an incredibly dedicated and generous colleague. The essays in the June and December issues are written by colleagues, friends, and former students in honor of him. Essays to be printed in the December issue are listed on the back cover.

Hans Dieter Betz traces the portrait of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is the assumed author, but the evangelist shows no interest in making the role of Jesus as teacher part of the instruction material. The written text of the Sermon contains the presence of the absent Jesus, and the purpose and goal of the Sermon are to create in the mind a clear image of the desired student and to help the disciples grow toward that image in practice. The central areas in which disciples must be educated are the interpretation of the Torah, the acts of worship important for discipleship, and eschatological expectation in view of the last judgment. No honorific titles are attributed to Jesus in the Sermon because nothing should distract the student from seeing in these words a mirror image of a human being *par excellence.*

John H. Elliott tells how a social reading of 1 Peter has accompanied and animated his pastoral and political involvement in the sanctuary movement.

The book of 1 Peter was the product of a sectarian community, with a sectarian view of itself and its relation to society. This household of God can and must live a life of holy non-conformity and must remain holy because the God who called it is holy. In the household of God the readers are urged to find a home for the homeless. The mainstream church has often made a faustian pact of compromise with society. 1 Peter depicts a church called to holiness, solidarity, and empowering witness in a fragmented, conflictive, and decidedly unholy world.

Robert Jewett asks how the concept of divine peace in Romans relates to the gospel of Christ crucified. This gospel sets right a human race whose twisted systems of competition and boasting have made conflict, even between fellow Christians, a chronic reality. Paul urges readers to accept the peace settlement brought by the blood of Christ, and then to cease the wars against God and our fellow human beings. Paul understands peace as the activity of God through the gospel, that transforms antagonists and makes cooperation possible. The angry tone in Rom 16:17-20 reflects the fact that it is an interpolation, which argues that the community of faith achieves divine peace when it deals forcefully with heretics. Elsewhere in Romans the gospel undermines the assumption that Christian groups should crush each other in order to achieve peace.

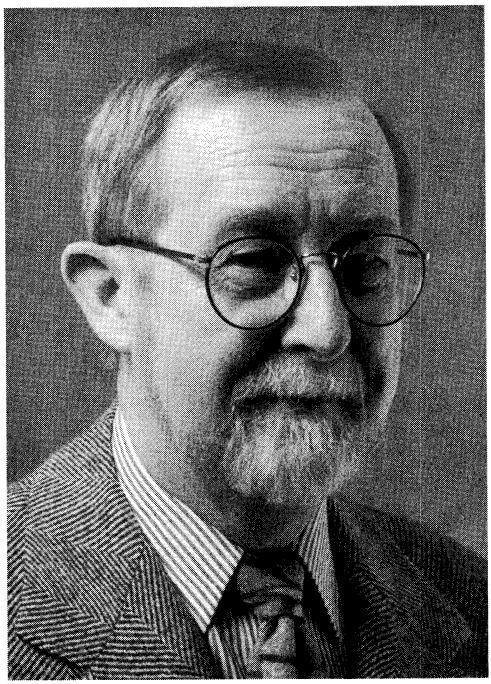
Wilhelm C. Linss writes of the hidden humor of Paul. This is a humor of irony, sarcasm, litotes and puns, but not of belly laughs. Some of Paul's humor is directed, self-deprecatingly, at himself. This humorous side of Paul is in contrast with our usual image of him as eager, earnest, serious, even severe.

Margaret M. Mitchell discusses 2 Thessalonians as a response to 1 Thessalonians, and Matthew as a response to Mark. In both cases there is a shift from the depiction of the vindication and just reward of the elect to a greater concentration upon the final destruction of the wicked. The wicked in 2 Thessalonians are outsiders who are persecuting the church while in Matthew they are fellow Christians who have failed to meet the community's ethical standards. Christians have often found it easier to construct powerful images of punishment rather than of salvation. We need pictures of a heaven worth finding and a salvation worth attaining. We need pictures of salvation more compelling that the pictures of salvation offered by advertising, sports, and medicine.

John Reumann tells the history of Lutheran theological faculties in the United States serving as part of the teaching office or magisterium. Formerly seminaries in the Missouri Synod offered "opinions" (*Gutachten*) on controver-

sial subjects, although that role has been displaced by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations. In the ALC and LCA, seminaries played a role in developing theological or social-ethical statements, and seminary presidents were given special voice in national deliberations. There is a long and proper role of involvement of theologians in the teaching office, and the church desires to include theologians in its discussions while recognizing that the teaching office is broader than seminary faculties. Various institutional forms could be taken by this teaching office—a commission on theology, canon theologians appointed by bishops, a quota of theologians elected for assemblies, or seminary input in developing churchwide statements.

St. Paul, who has been Ed's favorite biblical theologian, describes himself in words that fit our honoree as well: "So it was, my friends, that I came to you, without any pretensions to eloquence or wisdom in declaring the truth about God.... I came before you in weakness, in fear, in great trepidation.... I resolved that while I was with you I would not claim to know anything but Jesus Christ—Christ nailed to the cross."



Ralph W. Klein
Editor

The Portrait of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount[1]

Hans Dieter Betz
University of Chicago

To speak of a portrait of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount requires special justification. As far as the surface of the text is concerned, neither the Sermon on the Mount (SM/ Matthew 5:3–7:27) nor the parallel Sermon on the Plain (SP/Luke 6:20-49) include a literary portrait of Jesus. Moreover, as I have tried to demonstrate in several publications, neither of the two Sermons subscribe to a christology,[2] at least not in the sense normally connected to this concept.[3] There are no narratives in which the person of Jesus is the center of the activities. In particular, there is no reference in either of the Sermons to the death and resurrection kerygma, even at places where we might expect such a reference.

In the following thesis I argue that both the SM and the SP contain an image of Jesus that is somewhat different from the other synoptic texts. By implication, this thesis calls into question an apparent consensus among scholars that the oldest layers of the synoptic traditions project just one image of Jesus, while in fact different sections, layers or types of texts in the synoptic tradition project different images of Jesus.[4]

As a hermeneutic principle, it is char-

[1] The paper was first presented to the Seminar on the Historical Jesus at the SNTS annual meeting in Birmingham, GB, August 5, 1997; it is dedicated to my colleague and friend Edgar Krentz. It continues my previous work on the Sermon on the Mount (SM) and the Sermon on the Plain (SP). See my *Synoptische Studien. Gesammelte Aufsätze II* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1992); also, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); and, *The Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3–7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); furthermore, "Wellhausen's Dictum 'Jesus was not a Christian, but a Jew' in Light of Present Scholarship," *StTh* 45 (1991) 83-110.

[2] See my article, "The Problem of Christology in the Sermon on the Mount," *Synoptische Studien*, 230-48; and, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 685, *s.v.* christology.

[3] A special problem is presented by occurrence of the title "Son of Man" (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) in SP/Luke 6:22 because it remains unclear whether it refers to Jesus or another figure. See *The Sermon on the Mount*, 148-49, 581-82; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (JSJ.S 50; Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1996), 151.

[4] For a survey of the current state of

acteristic that thoughtful readers of the Sermons form images of Jesus in their minds as they read the texts.[5] As far as the text is concerned, these images of Jesus are based on two sources: on the self-referential "I say to you," recurring throughout the Sermons,[6] and on the information contained in the narrative frameworks provided by the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which are, however, secondary to the Sermons themselves.[7] In these narrative frameworks, Jesus is described as a teacher by his activity of διδάσκειν (SM/Matt 5:2; 7:29), and by calling his instruction διδαχή (SM/Matt 7:28). This instruction consists of λόγοι (SM/Matt 7:28, based on 7:24,26) or ῥήματα (Luke 7:1; cf. SP/Luke 6:47). Although there is no reason to doubt that these descriptions are historically accurate, the question remains why the Sermons have no designation of Jesus as διδάσκαλος internally. Strangely, when in SM/Matt 5:19 and SP/Luke 6:40 reference is made to teachers, it is not Jesus who is so designated.[8] Thus, it is important to recognize that our image of Jesus as teacher is actually based on the narratives of the Synoptics and not on the language of the Sermons.

What conclusions are we to draw from this observation? If my thesis is correct that the sayings collections in the Sermons form *epitomai* for the purpose of educating disciples of the Jesus movement,[9] the identity of the source of the sayings, the one who speaks the ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, is self-evident. Since there is no doubt that Jesus is the "assumed" author of the sayings, however, there seems to be no interest on the part of the "actual" authors[10] in making the role of Jesus as teacher part of the instruction material. This is evident from the passage in which formal devotion to the teacher is caricatured: Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι· κύριε κύριε, εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἀλλ' ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρός μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (SM/Matt 7:21; cf. similarly SP/Luke 6:46: Τί δέ με καλεῖτε· κύριε κύριε, καὶ οὐ ποιεῖτε ἃ λέγω).[11] The point seems to be that expressions of personal devotion too easily become a distraction from the aim of the learning, the ποιεῖν of what the teacher teaches.[12] These passages also reveal that a portrait of Jesus as teacher is present as subtext and that by careful interpretation such a portrait might therefore be made explicit. First, some methodological considerations are in order.

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research, see Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (NTTS 19; Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1994), especially the rich documentation in William R. Telford, "Major Trends and Interpretive Issues in the Study of Jesus" (33-74).

[5] The significance of the "image of Jesus" ("Jesusbild") has been recognized early on in the research on the historical Jesus, but present studies seem not to pay attention to how such an image is formed in connection with the tradition. See my commentary, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 33-36.

[6] See SM/Matt 5:18,20,22,26,28,32,34, 39,44; 6:2,5,16,25,29; SP/6:27,46. See also *The Sermon on the Mount*, 208-10, 592.

[7] See *The Sermon on the Mount*, 43-44, 80-82.

[8] Cf. for a quite different view, Matt 23:8-12, according to which the growing prestige of titles for "teacher" (ῥαββί, διδάσκαλος, πατήρ, καθηγητής) is seen as a problem; the solution is to reserve these titles for Jesus only. See also 1 Cor 12:29; Jas 3:1.

[9] See my essay, "The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:3–7:27): Its Literary Genre and Function," *Synoptische Studien*, 77-91; also *The Sermon on the Mount*, 70-88.

[10] For the distinction between the "assumed" and the "actual" author see *The Sermon on the Mount*, 4.

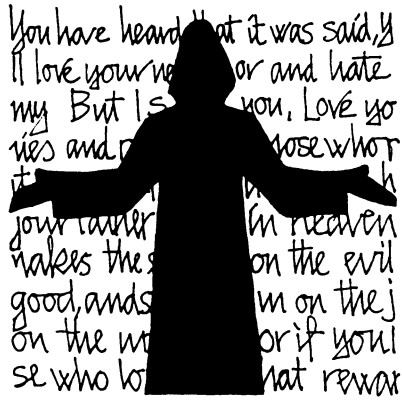
[11] On the passages see *The Sermon on the Mount*, 546, 636-37.

[12] See on this point also my article, "Vom wahren Lehrer," *Synoptische Studien*, 68-76.

Some preliminary observations on methodology

The omission of a χαρακτηρισμός[13] (characterization) of Jesus as a teacher in a text devoted to his teaching should not be regarded as accidental but as intended by the authors of the Sermons. This would correspond to educational methods developed in antiquity for focusing the students' attention on the aims of the learning process. As was recognized long ago, this process is in jeopardy when formal devotion to the teacher becomes confused with the substance of his teaching.

An interesting example of this point is found in Plato. In the exordium and narrative framework of his *Symposium*,[14] Plato presents an ironic description of some typical "fans" of Socrates who spend their time telling stories about their revered master and remembering what he said. One example is Apollodorus of Phalerum[15] with the telling epithet "crazy" (μανικός, 173d)[16] who received a report about the symposium from one Aristodemus of Cydathenaeum (173b),[17] but had to have Socrates confirm this version because of a conflicting story that had come to his companion Glaucon from yet another fellow, Phoenix, son of Philip (172b). Apollodorus liked to tell about his days of loose living before being converted to philosophy by Socrates, and about his daily concern for what the master said and did (172d-173a). Aristodemus was a little fellow, always barefooted like his master.[18] He followed Socrates wherever he went, in order not to miss anything he said or did. When that included going uninvitedly to the symposium at Agathon's,[19] Aristodemus' devotion was unconditional: Οὕτως ὅπως ἂν σὺ κελεύῃς (174b). By the end, however, he could not avoid falling asleep, so that he had no recollection of the conclusion of the philosophical discourse (223c).



Yet, the crowing of the cocks woke him up at dawn, just in time to follow Socrates devotedly, as he usually did (ὥσπερ εἰώθει ἕπεσθαι), to the Lyceum (223d).

It goes without saying that these "lovers" (ἐρασταί) of Socrates, despite or because of their fan mentality, completely failed to understand his teaching.[20] Nota-

[13] See on this rhetorical concept Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* (2 vols.; 2nd ed.; München: Hueber, 1973), 1. 406 (§ 818).

[14] Cited according to the edition by R. G. Bury, *The Symposium of Plato* (2nd ed., reprinted; Cambridge: Heffer, 1973).

[15] He is mentioned also in the *Phaedo* 59b, 117d, as weeping uncontrollably at the death of Socrates, and in *Apology* 34a, 38b as one of those who want to post bail to get Socrates out of prison. See also Xenophon, *Mem.* 3.11.17; *Apol.* 28.

[16] See Bury's note, p. 6 *ad loc.* Cf. the byname of the Cynic Diogenes of Sinope as Σωκράτης μαινόμενος; see Aelian, *Var. hist.* 14.33; Diogenes Laertius 6.54.

[17] See also Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.4.2.

[18] *Symp.* 173b: ὁ σμικρός, ἀνυπόδητος ἀεί. Cf. 174a; 220b; Aristophanes, *Nub.* 103; 362.

[19] See Bury's note, pp. 7-8 on the stock character of the παράσιτος.

[20] Plato's presentation of the failure of

Oral speeches frozen in the written text can and should be returned to orality for the learning process, which must consist of "hearing and doing."

bly, Plato, who clearly did understand, never mentioned being in their company. Plato's concern, however, corresponding to the form of dialogue by which he presented the figure of Socrates itself, conveyed in another way the teaching, thereby following Socrates' insistence on keeping the teaching and learning an oral activity.[21] I suggest that it is for this same reason that the two Sermons, SM and SP, do not include any reference to Jesus as having written, only as having spoken, the texts we now have in the pages of the New Testament. As the SM states (SM/Matt 5:18), only the Old Testament Scripture is to be written text,[22] while scriptural interpretation, that is, Jesus' commandments (ἐντολαί), are oral.[23]

This situation suggests three conclusions: First, while Jesus is the "assumed" author of all of the sayings, the actual "authors" of the written texts are those who composed the two Sermons that have become part of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Second, when Jesus is presented as the speaker of the λόγοι assembled in the two Sermons, he himself is presumed absent. What is present are the written sayings as composed by the actual "authors" of the Sermons. Third, and consequently, the written material then "preserves" the spoken sayings of the absent Jesus. This also implies that the oral speeches frozen in the written text can and should be returned to orality for the learning process, which must consist of "hearing and doing."

In a sense, then, the written texts of the instructions of the Sermons "contain" the presence of the absent Jesus. And, when pronounced, his sayings are returned to speech, so that a recitation of the ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν appears to be Jesus himself speaking the words. There are, however,

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Socrates' students to understand him, a literary motif not only in the *Symposium* but also in other dialogues, has an interesting parallel in the well-known motif in the Gospels showing the continual misunderstanding of Jesus by his own disciples. Whatever else can be said about this motif, one of its functions seems to be to discourage readers from focusing on Jesus' disciples as models for their imitation, rather than heeding Jesus' words and deeds. For a recent discussion of the topic see Gerd Theißen, "Die pragmatische Bedeutung der Geheimnismotive im Markusevangelium: Ein wissenssoziologischer Versuch," in Hans Kippenberg and Guy G. Stroumsa, eds., *Secrecy and Concealment. Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions* (Studies in the History of Religions; *Numen* Book Series 65; Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1995), 225-45.

[21] See Thomas A. Szlezák, *Platon lesen* (Stuttgart: frommann-holzboog, 1993), esp. 56-66 (on Plato's critique of writing in *Phaedr.* 274b-278e); idem, "'Menschliche' und 'göttliche' Darlegung. Zum 'theologischen' Aspekt des Redens und Schreibens bei Platon," in: *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion. Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag*, vol. II: *Griechische und Römische Religion* (ed. Hubert Cancik; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1996), 251-63.

[22] See *The Sermon on the Mount*, 182-84.

[23] *Ibid.*, 185-88 with n. 137.

some critical distinctions to be made.

First, the one who originally spoke the words is himself qualitatively different from the one later reciting them. The difference can be compared to that of a musician who plays, let us say, the music of Mozart.[24] By reading from a written score and performing in accordance with all indicated markings, the musician makes Mozart's music present, but does not thereby become Mozart. To be sure, the historical Mozart, who died and was buried, remains absent even as his music is being performed. And yet, the Mozart who expressed himself in this music, is in a real sense present again whenever musicians perform what he wrote. Furthermore, every informed listener recognizes him in this music, because Mozart is present as the invisible teacher of the performers. In other words, the performers of the music submit themselves *ipso facto* to the composer present in his music. Of course, the competence of the musicians is a critical element: They must perform *his* music, not their own. This distinction includes two levels: the technical level of dutifully rendering the marcations on the score written by the historical Mozart, and the level of musical interpretation which contains a creative element as well. The musicians' competency, then, can be described by the terms "hearing and doing": heeding to the invisible teacher present in the music, they perform *his* and not *their own* music. In so doing, however, they are, at the same time, also playing *their* music, so that the music is his as well as theirs. In this hermeneutical web, the highest level of competency is reached when the performers are no longer able to distinguish between his music and theirs, that is, when "Mozart" is heard. Clearly, this state of "doing" requires not only technical mastery but also a very high degree of intuition, if not a kind of inner conversation with the absent/present teacher about what is distinctive and unique to his music. The "quality" of the performance, the "doing," then depends on the depth of comprehension and the harmonious interaction between the composer and the performer.

The matter becomes hermeneutically even more complex, however, when we consider the reports that for Mozart the task of "composing" a score was actually only copying down, seemingly without effort and corrections, what he had composed previously in his head. In other words, *his* music is what *he himself* heard. This point is related to another, namely that he only wrote out scores to facilitate live performances by other musicians. Consequently, as a composer he was actually functioning as a mediating agent who wrote only what had been heard by his "inner ear" first. I have selected this extraordinary example of Mozart here as analogous to what *mutatis mutandis* applies to the two Sermons, SM and SP, not to mention other texts as well.

One should, therefore, assume that in the education of Jesus' disciples an imaginative portrait of Jesus as teacher is operative. This portrait is "contained" in his λόγοι. They can be compared with, to use Stoic terms, the λόγος προφορικός, while his presence to the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος.[25] However, the portrait of Jesus cannot simply be gleaned from the surface of his written sayings. Here, we must consider the learning process as a whole, both "hearing and doing," in all of its complexity.

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[24] For the following I am indebted to the work by Wolfgang Hildesheimer, *Mozart* (trans. Marion Faber; New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982), esp. 238-42.

[25] On these distinctions, see C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy*, vol. 3: *The Hellenistic-Roman Period* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 102-3 (#965); 372 (#1307).

As Jesus' words and life form a unity, so also his portrait conveyed in the teaching is the same as that presented in the narratives.

To have clarified, in its own way, the complicated relationship between the portrait of Jesus implicit in his teaching and the biographical portrait presented by the narrative of his life's story is the accomplishment of the Fourth Gospel. To state the matter in Johannine terms briefly, the first, the λόγοι taught by Jesus contain the λόγος that is identical with the divine Logos incarnate in him (1:1-14).[26] The second, the "biographical" portrait is presented in the literary narratives of the Gospel, and this portrait is at the same time a mirror image of the invisible God (1:18; 5:37; 6:46): ὁ θεωρῶν ἐμὲ θεωρεῖ τὸν πέμψαντά με (12:45; cf. 6:40; 14:5-21). As a teacher, Jesus reveals the divine Logos to those who are able to hear it in his words, and in this way he challenges the world with the eschatological κρίσις (3:16-21).[27] At the same time, as the Logos incarnated in the human person of Jesus he reveals the image of the invisible God to those able to comprehend his life and death. Therefore, as Jesus' words and life form a unity, so also his portrait conveyed in the teaching is the same as that presented in the narratives.[28] Helping the reader to "see" the image of Jesus as redeemer in both, and to perceive through this image the divine Father, is the aim and purpose of the Fourth Gospel.

Compared with the Fourth Gospel, the two Sermons themselves do not contain biographical narratives, but sayings only. In this respect, the SM and SP represent a stage prior to the narratives. Regarding the sayings tradition, the two Sermons show also an earlier level of thinking which appears to be basically similar to that of John's Gospel, only the latter presents a more developed form. This will now be demonstrated in greater detail.

The external evidence

The external evidence of the texts under discussion provides a relatively detailed picture of the learning process presupposed by the two Sermons. On the whole, as any education, this process is down-to-earth and practical, but it also conforms to what can be seen in other, more theoretical, educational texts from antiquity. Rather than discussing generalities, however, it is most instructive to view the evidence in the two Sermons concretely.

1. The personae. The *personae* involved are clearly distinguishable. They are ordered by the traditional hierarchy. As already discussed, Jesus is viewed as the teacher *par excellence*, the teacher of teachers, *in absentia.*

The actual teachers, supposed to use the Sermons as instruction material, are warned in SM/Matt 5:19 against setting aside Jesus' teachings and replacing them

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[26] See Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; trans. Kendrick Grobel; New York: Scribner's, 1951, 1955), 2.59-69 (§ 48): "The Revelation of the Word."

[27] See Bultmann, *ibid.*, 2.33-49 (§§ 45-46).

[28] See Bultmann, *ibid.*, 2.70-74 (§ 49).

with their own. Since Jesus' "commandments" (ἐντολαί) are presumed to be interpretations of Scripture,[29] these unfaithful teachers would in fact abrogate "Torah and prophets," which explains the warnings in SM/Matt 5:17-18. They would thus mislead the people whom they are teaching about the standards of δικαιοσύνη required for entering into the kingdom of God (SM/Matt 5:20; cf. 7:15-20, 21-23).[30]

b. A somewhat different situation is suggested by the school rules in SP/Luke 6:27-45. According to 6:40, the students are divided into two groups: the μαθηταί as "students in training," and the κατηρτισμένοι as those who have "graduated."[31] Supposedly, all students are expected to graduate, but not all to become teachers. During training the student is under the supervision of the teacher (διδάσκαλος), but in the community the graduate is equal in rank with the teacher. Thus, student and teacher are merely functional terms that do not denote permanent status. There is no provision for a hierarchy of offices, but the desired goal of education is the equal status as ἀγαθοὶ ἄνθρωποι before God (6:45).

2. The process of education. The educational process is basically one and the same for all disciples. That the teacher instructs (διδάσκειν) by speaking and by example is a commonplace in ancient education. That he is accountable to uphold the standards set by the Sermons cannot, however, be taken for granted. Not only the students, but the teachers also can fail, both with eschatological consequences.

The disciples envisioned in the SM and SP are expected to learn by traditional means. Central to this process are the "hearing and doing" of the commandments of Jesus, which involves reflection and understanding as well as experience of success and failure.[32] A high value is placed on "seeing"[33] and "observing,"[34] both with reference to the natural environment, human conduct in general, and even imagining through metaphors and myth the future in this life and in the afterlife. All learning is aimed at accepting a lifetime of struggle with the real world, making individual choices in the seeking of God's righteousness (SM/Matt 6:33),[35] and overcoming obstacles on the route to the eternal kingdom of God (7:13-14).[36] While in each of these points both Sermons are in agreement, in other matters there are differences. The SM focuses on the learning of the essentials of the Jewish religion, that is, the principles and methods of Jesus' interpretation of the Torah (SM/Matt 5:17-48), three main acts of worship (6:1-18), ground-rules for grappling with the daily life (6:19-7:12), as well as eschatological expectations (7:13-23). In contrast, the SP views the ethical teaching of Jesus from the perspective of Greek culture. That perspective is focused on ethical expectations concerning poverty and wealth (SP/Luke 6:20-26), the central importance of Jesus' love command as the ground-rule for personal relationships with the outside world (6:27-38), the fellow-student (6:39-42), and the self (6:43-45).

3. The goals of education. The goal of this education is a constitutive element in every statement in both of the Sermons; this goal is kept persistently before the reader's eyes by the image of the *desired* student, also described thematically in key passages at

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[29] See *The Sermon on the Mount*, 187-88.

[30] *Ibid.*, 189-97.

[31] *Ibid.*, 622-26.

[32] *Ibid.*, 5, 66, 82-88, 516-17, 558, 560-67, 637-39.

[33] *Ibid.*, 82, 492, 626-27.

[34] *Ibid.*, 472-80.

[35] *Ibid.*, 481-84.

[36] *Ibid.*, 520-27.

both beginnings and ends.

a. In two somewhat different versions, the Parable of the Two Builders forms the conclusion to both Sermons (SM/Matt 7:24-27; SP/Luke 6:20-49).[37] Traditional in ancient educational materials, these two builders of a house represent contrasting figures.

The desired disciple is more than the components necessary for his education.

Drawn with great care and in considerable detail, the faithful disciple builds his house on solid rock, while the failing disciple builds his on unstable sand. One is called an ἀνὴρ φρόνιμος, and the other an ἀνὴρ μωρός. The difference between them is that the first hears and does the words of Jesus, while the second hears only and fails to do them. It is noteworthy that the version in SP/Luke 6:47-49 provides more detail by describing with metaphors the efforts needed, whereas SM/Matt 7:24-26 draws on the support of the Two Ways pattern of the eschatological section (SM/Matt 7:13-23), not present in the SP.

b. At the beginning of both Sermons, the desired student is characterized in detail in the sections devoted to the beatitudes (SM/Matt 5:3-12; SP/Luke 6:20-26). However, the presentations are remarkably different.[38] The SM presents an escalating list of ten desirable qualities of ethical conduct, beginning with humility (SM/Matt 5:3) and climaxing in the call to joy, justified by the reward stored in the heavens (5:12).[39] Assurance is also provided by the declarations of μακάριος in each of the beatitudes. Taken together, the beatitudes characterize the faithful disciples in Jewish terms as those who have achieved the greater δικαιοσύνη (5:20) and meet the eschatological standards as τέλειοι (5:48)[40] and υἱοί of the heavenly Father (SM/Matt 5:9, 45; 7:9-11).[41] These are also those who are qualified and commissioned to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (5:13-16). They are throughout the SM juxtaposed to the inadequate and failing disciples who in the Last Judgment are rejected for their ἀνομία (7:23).[43]

Differently, the SP works with Greek concepts, juxtaposing social types, giving the blessing to the poor (SP/Luke 6:20-23) and condemning the rich (6:24-26).[44] The desired student is characterized by the Greek ideal of the ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος, while his counterpart is not even granted the name ἄνθρωπος and is simply called πονηρός (6:45).[45] Those who qualify as ἀγαθοὶ ἄνθρωποι can expect great reward in heaven (6:23,35),[46] and they will be υἱοὶ ὑψίστου (6:35).[47]

In the final analysis, both Sermons may be said to focus on the meaning of ἄνθρωπος. This term designates human beings as ambivalent figures. They are the crowds, for whom the disciples should be guiding lights (SM/Matt 5:16), but who can

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[37] *Ibid.*, 557-67, 636-40.

[38] *Ibid.*, 91-153, 571-89.

[39] Cf. SM/Matt 6:1,2,5,16. See *The Sermon on the Mount*, 152-53.

[40] *Ibid.*, 322-25.

[41] *Ibid.*, 140-42, 324, 457.

[42] *Ibid.*, 154-65.

[43] *Ibid.*, 551-52.

[44] *Ibid.*, 571-89.

[45] *Ibid.*, 629-35.

[46] *Ibid.*, 152 n. 506, 583-85, 609-10.

[47] *Ibid.*, 609-12.

be fickle and dangerous to them in a variety of ways (5:13; 6:1,5,16,18; 7:12; SP/Luke 6:22,26,31). All humans are sinners who need forgiveness (SM/Matt 6:14-15). From their midst the disciples of Jesus are called to face the human condition,[48] in order to become human as God intends them to be.

Discipleship and the presence of the Teacher

The external evidence does not reveal all that is to be said with regard to the desired disciple; this evidence provides necessary components but not the complete image. The desired disciple is more than the components necessary for his education. As indicated by the predicates μακάριος, τέλειος and υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, as well as by the constant references to the future, the desired student is an eschatological figure, whose final destiny is to be held to the criteria by which God will render judgment. These criteria are in fact set forth by the teachings in the Sermons throughout. They do not, however, consist of laws to be obeyed but of guidelines enabling the disciples to follow what appears to be the *telos*-formula in SM/Matt 6:33: ζητεῖτε δὲ πρῶτον τὴν βασιλείαν [τοῦ θεοῦ] καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ.[49] Creating in the mind a clear image of the desired student and helping the disciples to grow toward it in practice is the purpose and goal of discipleship.

This process of formation, however, is not to be misunderstood as conforming to a preestablished ideal or role model. Rather, in order to facilitate their discernment of the criteria, the two Sermons constantly engage the disciples in imaginative exercises, consisting of dialogues, observations of life, projections of possibilities, and the practice of choice making. What happens in that process is that the disciples work out exactly what they are called to become as individuals and as a group. As "sons of the heavenly Father" the disciples are free to develop their personalities as individuals in the context of a culture of experiences and expectations.

If they are as free as the title "sons" implies, growing into desired disciples is not, however, to be confused with an arbitrary construction of their own identities. Rather, the very notion of discipleship implies the consent that their identity is set before them as the image of the desired disciple which is defined by the mirror image of the teacher, that is, Jesus. Paradoxically perhaps, having accepted the choice of their identity they are free and able to develop their own abilities and personalities. However different they may be as individuals, the disciples are always the disciples of Jesus. With respect to the education process as heretofore described, disciples learn to look at themselves as if into a mirror; the image that appears, however, is a portrait of Jesus. Thus, in a progression of discipleship, Jesus' portrait emerges gradually and more clearly from the memorized words to inform their self-image.

The portrait of Jesus

It should now have become clear why there is no explicit χαρακτηρισμός of Jesus in either of the two Sermons. This portrait emerges from his teachings in the disciples' process of working out their own self-image. Every mirror image requires an oppositional source. The fragile nature of the image is such that it prohibits any attempt to arrive at the source by circumventing discipleship. Having said this, however, some contours in these texts may help as to arrive

[48] *Ibid.*, 114-16, 119, 120, 123, 126, 129, 146, 461-62.

[49] *Ibid.*, 481-84.

at a few conclusions with regard to the historical Jesus.

1. Jesus as teacher. As the evangelists have clearly seen and stated, Jesus' portrait is that of the teacher, not just any teacher, but one who is perceived as teaching ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων. To be sure, the evangelists have different ideas about this ἐξουσία, and only Matthew identifies the term specifically with the SM as a whole.[50] Those disciples who become teachers themselves are not supposed to replace Jesus (SM/Matt 5:19), who remains the teacher of the teachers. As the New Testament elsewhere reveals, early Christianity wrestled with the question of the qualifications for the true teacher. However, an extended discussion of these issues would exceed the limits of this paper.

Jesus appears as a competent interpreter of the will of God as revealed in the Torah and the prophets (5:17; 7:12). His knowledge is such that he is able to discern God's will (6:10; 7:21). This knowledge thus enables him to evaluate the biblical tradition afresh and to offer new interpretations; he is not confined to conventional interpretations but is independent and critical of them. This does not, of course, contradict that he is faithful to God's will as it is revealed in the Torah and the prophets and that as a teacher he is committed to imparting that divine will to his students. Hence, the famous phrase "but I say to you" expresses the authority of the competent teacher who has an authentic understanding of the divine revelation, but is not intended to claim license to supersede or abrogate the Torah and the prophets (5:17).

As a Jewish teacher, Jesus is assumed to be competent. For the SM, he has identified the central areas of training, in which Jewish disciples must be educated: the interpretation of the Torah regarding law and ethics (SM/Matt 5:17-48), the acts of worship important for discipleship (almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, 6:1-18), the conduct of the daily life (6:19-7:12), and the eschatological expectation in view of the Last Judgment (7:13-23). It must also be counted as part of Jesus' competence that from his teaching, guidelines for the training of non-Jewish disciples with a Greek background were derived (the SP).

Given this high level of competency, one must surmise that Jesus himself was trained. This suggestion, of course, raises a host of questions. At present, little is known about how a teacher such as Jesus might have been trained. Inferences from Qumranic or later rabbinic schooling are suggestive but may not apply. As Judaism in the first century was very diverse, so probably was Jewish education. If John the Baptist played a major role as Jesus' teacher, as I assume he did,[51] about the only thing we know about the mode of the Baptist's teaching is that it was very effective. The example of the Greek philosophers, foremost among them Socrates, shows that their rather informal instruction produced brilliant scholars. Taking all the evidence we have into account, the conclusion is not unreasonable that Jesus was a learned man and that his education was substantial, given the conditions. Schooling by itself, whether formal or informal, can neither guarantee an education worth its name nor limit gifted minds from tapping resources on their own.

As these are the marks of the genuine teacher, other traits can be added. If in the

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[50] See, especially, Mark 1:22,27 // Luke 4:32,36; Matt 7:29 applies the statement to the SM.

[51] See Robert L. Webb, "John the Baptist and His Relationship to Jesus," in *Studying the Historical Jesus* (see above, n. 4), 179-229, especially 214-19.

name of Jesus all teaching is subject to δικαιοσύνη (SM/Matt 5:6,10,20; 6:1,33),[52] it can be inferred that his own practical life conformed to that teaching. Such inference can be justified by the fact that for all of antiquity compatibility of word and deed was regarded as hallmark of a true teacher's integrity. The fact, however, that both Sermons abstain completely from depicting Jesus in action seems to indicate, either on the one hand, that at the time of the composition of the Sermons his living example was no longer available, or, on the other hand that there is no doubt in the minds of their authors that Jesus' words were compatible with his life. If at this point we should expect a reference in the Sermons to Jesus' death on the cross, surprisingly, no such reference is mentioned.

When in SM/Matt 7:21-23 at the Last Judgment, Jesus appears as the advocate of his disciples, qualification as a righteous man (δίκαιος) is presupposed for this role.[53] In Judaism at the time, only a righteous teacher could be a teacher of righteousness,[54] a righteousness to be sure that would be approved by God in the Last Judgment. This eschatological adequacy also determines the quality of his ethical wisdom. If both Sermons contain a great deal of ethical wisdom, it is this wisdom that informs the prudent disciple (ἀνὴρ φρόνιμος). In order to teach prudence, to be sure, the teacher must be prudent himself, so that Jesus can be presumed to exemplify the ἀνὴρ φρόνιμος of SM/Matt 7:24-27 // SP/Luke 6:47-49.

2. Jesus as human being. At no point in either of the two Sermons is Jesus as the teacher *par excellence* viewed as more than a human being. In fact, in the Lord's Prayer, which I assume goes back to the historical Jesus,[55] he presents himself as a human being when in the invocation (SM/Matt 6:9) he defines those who pray as standing before the heavenly Father to include himself.[56] God reigns in heaven and human beings call him from earth. If the goal of discipleship by Jesus is to become as God intends human beings to be, it must have been Jesus' own goal as well.[57] Not surprisingly, the term ἄνθρωπος and the subject of anthropology play an important role in both Sermons. It seems that in the final analysis no honorific titles are attributed to Jesus in the Sermons because nothing should distract the student from seeing in his words a mirror image of an ἄνθρωπος *par excellence*.

At no point in either of the two Sermons is Jesus as the teacher *par excellence* viewed as more than a human being.

[52] See also *The Sermon on the Mount*, 684, index s.v. δικαιοσύνη.

[53] *Ibid.*, 552-56.

[54] Cf. the figure of the "teacher of righteousness" (מורה הצדק) in the Dead Sea Scrolls; see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* (new ed. by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, Matthew Black; Edinburgh: Clark, 1979), 2.551-52.

[55] See *The Sermon on the Mount*, 372-73.

[56] *Ibid.*, 386-89.

[57] For the theology of the Lord's Prayer, see *ibid.*, 377-82.

The Church as Counter-culture: A Home for the Homeless and a Sanctuary for Refugees

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In the following remarks I would like to bring together and relate two current passions of mine: the biblical writing of 1 Peter, and, in connection with my parish in Berkeley, California, University Lutheran Chapel, a rather long personal, pastoral and political involvement in the U.S. sanctuary movement and partnership with the Christian Church in El Salvador. My aim is to reflect on how professional theological work and spiritual, pastoral concerns nurture, sustain, and confirm each other. The point is an important one to make, I think, at a time in the academy and the professional theological guilds, when the commitments and passions of one's personal life as believer are often seen as distinct and separable from the foci and activities of one's academic life.

This is a topic that our honoree, Edgar Krentz, and I have mulled over as far back as our days as colleagues at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, during the tumultuous years of the Civil Rights movement. As my former teacher and then as colleague and confidant, Ed saw at an early stage my own wrestling with this issue, and his wise counsel, like his earlier encouragement to pursue a doctoral degree in exegesis, had a formative effect on my personal *Laufbahn* and my efforts at integrating the roles of exegete and theologian with those of pastor and citizen. Reflection on these efforts, partly exegetical, partly historical, and partly unabashedly sermonic in form, in a volume honoring Ed, I hope, is an appropriate way of expressing my personal gratitude to a friend whose gifts as teacher, mentor, and servant of the church have put so many in his debt.

Some years ago, as the war in El Salvador was still raging and refugees from that beleaguered corner of the world flooded across the United States border, it gradually occurred to me how remarkably similar the economic, political, and social situation of first-century Christianity in Asia Minor as reflected in 1 Peter was to the situation faced by the church in current Central

America. In both cases we saw the colonizing presence of a foreign world power (Rome or the United States), economic control and exploitation of the natural resources by this foreign imperial power and its corporations, collusion on the part of local rulers, expropriation of the land and its concentration in the hands of a few ruling families, reduction of the peasantry to the status of "by-dwellers" and resident aliens in their own land (*paroikoi* as they were called in 1 Peter), Christians (including many of the by-dwellers) on the move and on the run, social conflict eventually escalating to political conflict and Christian martyrdom (subsequent to 1 Peter but current in Central America), and foreign cultural hegemony imposed on the native and Christian populations, sustained by an imperialist propaganda claiming that Rome or the United States was "big daddy" and knew what is best for these native, subdued populations.

In similar fashion, the response to the first century predicament advocated in the book of 1 Peter was remarkably akin to the stance taken by today's church in both Central and North America: protest against the suffering of the innocent (see *Kairos Central America*, 1988), resistance to foreign incursion and collaboration, efforts at forging Christian solidarity and promoting nonconformity, and the worldwide Christian family of God offering sanctuary to the oppressed and a home for those who had no home.

Before a consideration of these matters in more detail, however, a few words about 1 Peter seem necessary. For in one of the ironies of ecclesiastical and exegetical history, this central writing of the New Testament according to Martin Luther has been consigned to the dustbin of history by modern theologians and exegetes.

Let us recall that for Luther, 1 Peter, along with Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and the Gospel of John, constituted "*das Kernstück des Neuen Testaments*," the very heart of the New Testament and kernel of the Christian gospel (*Vorreden zum Neuen Testament*, 1522). Why? Because, said Luther, "they show you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and salvatory for you to know... [they show] how faith in Christ overcomes sin, death and hell, and gives life, righteousness and salvation" (*Luther's Works* 35:361-62). Luther's axiological principle for measuring the New Testament writings was, as is well-known, "*was Christum treibet*:" that is gospel and salvatory which has the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ at its center as the power that transforms and transfigures human existence. And for Luther, this clearly was the case with 1 Peter.

For modern theology, on the other hand, dominated in great part by German scholarship, particularly in the field of exegesis, interest has shifted from *was Christum treibet* to *was Paulum treibet, was Gesetz und Evangelium treibet, was Apokalyptik treibet, was individualistische, protestantische Interessen treibet*, "that which shows you Paul, law and gospel, apocalyptic, and individualistic protestant modern theological interests." Under this teutonic protestant dominance and its anti-Catholic bias, the apostle Peter and the entire Petrine tradition has been marginalized and 1 Peter was reduced to the "junk mail" of the New Testament, a step-child of the biblical canon.

Other factors have also contributed to the neglect of 1 Peter in recent times. One such factor involves a certain popular-level pietistic reading of the letter—a grievous misreading of 1 Peter in my estimation. This reading rests on the assumption that this New Testament writing articulates an escapist, pie-in-the-sky theology according to which its readers are depicted as pilgrims and exiles on earth waiting to shuffle off

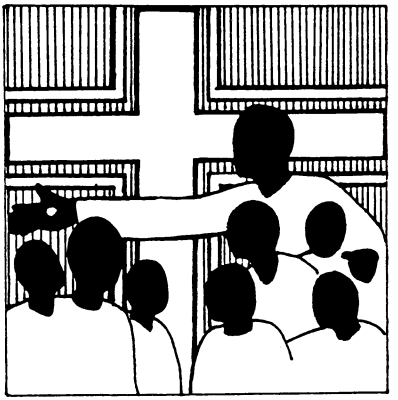
this mortal coil and after death join God in heaven. This view, while nurtured by an unfounded assumption of a heaven/earth polarity not present in 1 Peter, rests chiefly on an interpretation of certain Greek terms that are used repeatedly of the addressees of this letter in chapters 1 and 2; namely *parepidêmoi, paroikoi*, and *paroikia*; see Elliott 1981/1990:21-58. The first term occurs at the letter's outset to identify its addressees as "temporary visitors" residing in the Diaspora of four provinces of Asia Minor (1:1). The word is employed once more in 2:11, in combination with the related term *paroikoi*. Here the author exhorts his audience as "resident aliens and temporary visitors," an expression used by Abraham (Gen 23:4) to identify himself as a landless "resident alien and temporary visitor" among the Hittites, to lead honorable and God-pleasing lives in the Diaspora of Asia Minor where they now resided (cf. 1:1). The third word, *paroikia*, meaning "alien residence," occurs in an earlier passage (1:17), which makes a similar point: Since you are to "be holy as God is holy" (1:16), and "since you call upon a Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with reverence throughout the time of your alien residence." Rather than understanding these terms as conventional language of the day for foreigners and aliens and in fact terms used in the Greek Old Testament to describe Abraham, Sarah and later Israel as a whole as strangers and aliens in the lands of Canaan, or later Egypt and still later Babylon, some commentators instead imagine that these terms describe the readers as spiritual pilgrims and exiles *on earth* rather than as actual aliens in society. They hold this view despite the fact that the expression "on earth" is nowhere to be found in the original Greek text. Indeed, some translators, so convinced are they of this letter's pie-in-the-sky theology, go so far as to add these words in their translations, the Greek text of 1 Peter notwithstanding; see Elliott 1981/1990:21-58. The sentiment of this morose and defeatist theology is captured in that hymn long popular in pietist circles, "I am but a stranger here, heaven is my home." It is difficult to imagine a sentiment less compatible with the modern post-Enlightenment *Zeitgeist* with its embrace of the world as the arena of human life and advancement, and the earth as the focus of human control and domination. If this were really the message of 1 Peter, it is small wonder that this writing finds so little modern resonance.

A second popular-level factor has also undermined interest in 1 Peter even when its message is properly understood as a call to Christians as strangers and aliens to live in such a way that the lines distinguishing the Christian brotherhood from the surrounding society are clear and indisputable. This is an unease over the fact that the thought and strategy of 1 Peter sounds like that of a sect. The irony here is that this suspicion is correct. 1 Peter, like most of the NT writings, indeed represents the worldview, thinking, and strategy of a messianic sect of Israel seeking to forge a beachhead in Asia Minor and elsewhere throughout the Mediterranean world and encountering local resistance as well as worldwide social hostility and oppression (Elliott 1995). Disdained by their neighbors as "resident aliens and strangers" with no roots in, or ties with, the localities in which they reside, they have met with the ignorance, suspicion, and verbal abuse typically directed by natives against those who do not share the history, traditions, customs, loyalties, and deities of the local populace. As aliens and strangers they were suspected and slandered of being up to no good, involved in doing what was wrong, and a threat to the favor of the local gods and the well-being of

their communities. Suspicion bred slander, and slander in turn resulted in undeserved suffering, the central theme of this letter. In the face of this situation which threatened the very survival of the community, let alone its growth, the Petrine author affirms the Christian community to be the elect and holy people of God. They are indeed aliens and strangers just as were their patriarchal ancestors Sarah and Abraham. Distinct from society preeminently because of their exclusive union with and allegiance to God and Jesus Christ, they have been called by God to lead lives of holy non-conformity, to resist the pressures urging cultural assimilation to pagan standards of behavior, and to be so engaged in holiness and the doing of good that even their detractors would be led to glorify God in the day of visitation. Christians, 1 Peter asserts, are strangers and resident aliens in society and should remain so. For in the household of God and the brotherhood of faith these strangers and aliens have found a home with God.

Sectarian movements, however, whether ancient or modern, do not sit well with Christian churches of the mainstream. Again, it is difficult to imagine a message and a movement more alien to mainstream modern Christianity and its complete identification with the values and goals of modern society and culture, its eschewing of notions of divine election in the name of tolerance and equality, its fundamental uninterest in family and home as model of community, and its absolute fear and loathing of strangers and aliens, *Gastarbeiter* and Latino "wetbacks" crossing borders and competing with natives for jobs and social welfare.

As a result, in our own day, in Christian theology, exegesis, pulpit and pew, 1 Peter is treated as an exegetical step-child and its message as thoroughly out of tune with the principles of compromise and going along



in order to get along. How Luther must be turning in his grave!

I have devoted most of my theological career to the rehabilitation of this exegetical step-child. The more I study it, the more alien it seems to the interests and projects of mainstream Christianity. And yet the more vital and vibrant a witness to faith it becomes for people consigned to the margins of society, the refugees, the displaced persons, the homeless of our streets, the aliens.

But my intention in this essay is not to engage in a full-blown analysis of 1 Peter or to trace my attraction to its message as a mainstream Lutheran; for this see Elliott 1966, 1981/1990, 1982. Rather I want to recall how a social reading of this New Testament gem has accompanied and animated my pastoral and political involvement in what a representative of the United States government has called the most subversive activity of our time—the U.S. sanctuary movement.

To do this I need to supply a bit of personal background information.

It was in 1965 in St. Louis, Missouri, while I was teaching with our honoree at Concordia Seminary, that I lost my political innocence. The occasion was my involve-

Christians, 1 Peter asserts, are strangers and resident aliens in society and should remain so.

ment with the civil rights movement and participation in a march in Selma, Alabama, under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. This first experience of social oppression and confrontation at close quarter on the dusty streets of Selma, and then the criticism I received from many quarters including some of my own seminary colleagues for engaging in civil disobedience, was a shocker. "How dare you mix religion and politics!" my critics said. "How dare you lend your clerical collar to social causes and sully the good name of the seminary!" The virulence of this criticism took me by surprise, as did my involvement with Martin Luther King itself. I did not respond to the request of his aides to join the Selma march out of some carefully-honed political theology. I was reacting more to a gut feeling. It just seemed like the right thing to do, and the then Dean of the seminary, Arthur Repp, bless his soul, gave me his blessing when I told him of my reason for missing class the following day. The criticism that our entourage of layfolk, priests and nuns encountered upon returning to St. Louis told me not only of the great reluctance on the part of the ecclesiastical establishment to get its hands dirty with social issues; it also forced me to come to grips with my own calling as Christian, exegete, teacher, and citizen. What *did* I think religion and theology had to do with economic oppression, social alienation, and political policy? I left St. Louis and the seminary in 1967, in part because my position there had become rather tenuous. Political engagement in those days was viewed by the Lutheran mainstream as liberalism, and liberalism was equated with heresy, as my Concordia colleagues were soon to discover. At the Jesuit University of San Francisco where I had been appointed to a chair of theology and where I took up residence from 1967 onward, I had the freedom to pursue these questions without institutional duress and the "nattering nabobs of negativism," to misappropriate an expression from our notorious former Vice President.

In the meantime, the focus of national attention was shifting from the civil rights movement to the Viet Nam war. As we church folk tried to make sense of this war and to comfort the families, some of whose sons were falling in Viet Nam rice paddies and others whose sons had enlisted voluntarily, it became clear to me that the church was offering little help in the conscientious deliberation on these matters, for our moral theology and ethics was primarily a strictly personal, individualistic one. We pastors and laity for the most part had little training or means to investigate and understand the social dimensions of war, militarism, corporate structures and interests, and national programs. It was at this point that I realized that to get a handle on such comprehensive and interlocking issues, we needed to look at things from the vantage-point of the social sciences. As I began to immerse myself in this study for pastoral reasons to aid my preaching and counseling, I gradually realized that such a comprehensive social view of things was required for understanding other ages and social movements as well,

including those of biblical times. As a result of this realization, I began in the early 1970s to study the New Testament from a specifically sociological perspective and to comprehend the message of 1 Peter in an entirely new light.

At this same time, the Viet Nam war raged unabated and the casualties mounted, and many Christians and churches began expressing public resistance to the war and called for its termination. On November 7, 1971, our church in Berkeley, California, the University Lutheran Chapel serving the faculty and students of the University of California at Berkeley, arrived at a momentous decision. As a response to the many military personnel refusing as conscientious objectors to participate further in the war, our community offered our church as a sanctuary. In a formal public statement, we defined "sanctuary" as providing "shelter and sustenance to military personnel conscientiously unable to continue their participation in the armed forces or in combat duties." Sanctuary was viewed as "an acceptance of the responsibility of a religious community to honor and support the demands of personal conscience and moral decisions by providing a space, a holy space, and a holy community which offered physical, emotional, and legal support, pastoral counseling, and a setting where the relevant moral issues could be joined and an atmosphere could be provided that was humane, open, and free from extensive tension or hostility."

As a result of this action I learned something about holiness, a concept that I had taught in my lectures on 1 Peter but had not yet experienced in my personal life. Holiness, *sanctitas*, from which "sanctuary" derives, at base identifies that which is regarded and experienced as ultimate power, the power of God as the Wholly Other experienced in fear, awe, and trembling. Such holiness has always been regarded not only as power and energy able to destroy or make alive, injure or heal. Holiness as power has also been regarded as contagious. From antiquity onwards humans have understood that holiness was like a forcefield that could positively or negatively affect all in its path. Our congregation quickly learned about the infectious power of such holiness through our offering of our church and its resources as sanctuary. For soon other churches and synagogues throughout the Bay Area and across the country began following the lead of the initial sanctuary churches and a nation-wide sanctuary movement was underway. Within a year, in fact, the good old secular city of Berkeley declared itself a sanctuary, the first such undertaking on the part of a city in the history of our country. Talk about the infectious power of holiness from churchly to public domain!

In a few years public opposition to the war became so widespread and the prosecution of the war so ineffectual, that the United States government had no recourse but to arrange for the gradual withdrawal of troops. To this day, however, we are still suffering the calamitous consequences of an immoral war immorally prosecuted, as any homeless Vet will remind us.

In the late 70s I completed a new study on 1 Peter interpreted now from a social-scientific perspective: *A Home for the Homeless. A Sociological Study of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (published by Fortress Press in 1981). Response to this work showed me this cross-disciplinary approach to exegesis was being taken up by many other exegetes as well in this country and beyond. A Portuguese translation in 1985 and a Spanish translation in 1995 made it especially clear how useful such an interpretive approach was found to be for the churches of the third world.

At this same time, however, a new war

was in the making—this time in Central America and El Salvador in particular; see Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People* (1982). Again, Christians across the country voiced their opposition and again this protest fell on deaf governmental ears. The United States government was pouring millions of dollars daily into a war designed to advance United States colonial and capitalist operations in the countries to our immediate south. As tolls of the dead, over 100,000 Salvadorans, and shocking estimates of the so-called "disappeared" mounted daily, and as the refugees came streaming over our borders—all "undocumented aliens"—the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (with a Lutheran at its head) began a vicious crackdown on these desperate but unwanted aliens. Its claim was that these victims of the bombs manufactured in the United States and of death squads trained in the United States were "economic" rather than "political" refugees. They allegedly were in the United States for jobs and posed a threat to United States laborers. They were rounded up and returned—many to certain death. Of more than 40,000 refugees, 98% were refused asylum.

So once again our congregation in Berkeley, together with other churches and synagogues of the area, offered its premises as a sanctuary—this time not for U.S. citizens declining to serve as military but for strangers and resident aliens from beyond our borders. The reaction of the governmental authorities was predictable: phone-tapping, raids on churches, infiltration of Bible study groups, arrests, and imprisonment of sanctuary workers on charges of "conspiracy," with no opportunity allowed for their self-defense on religious grounds. Gary MacEoin offers "A Brief History of the Sanctuary Movement" in his study, *Sanctuary* (1985), a work containing papers delivered at the Inter-American Symposium on Sanctuary held in Tucson, Arizona, January 23-24, 1995, and attended by hundreds of representatives from across the country. The volume by Renny Golden and Michael McConnell, *Sanctuary: The New Underground Railroad* (1986) provides additional documentation of "the hypocrisy and duplicity of U.S. foreign policy" in this sad chapter of U. S. history. *Sanctuary Stories* by Michael Smith (1996) gives personal and moving voice to the hundreds of refugees who eventually made it to the East Bay Sanctuary in Berkeley, California.

Once again, however, a renewed sanctuary movement grew by leaps and bounds and again spread to churches and synagogues across the country and even throughout Europe. Once again Christians and religious communities found themselves in opposition to their own government. Once again we Christians found ourselves called upon to concretize our notions of holy space and holy ground and holy community by practicing a holy non-conformity and by offering a home to the homeless, regardless of the consequences. Now that that war has terminated, our parish together with a network of churches and synagogues of the Bay Area has formed alliances with our sister-churches below the border. We visit them regularly in delegations involving lay folk, pastors and bishops; we receive and host their representatives among us; and we continue to offer our support in every way possible.

And once again, I, in particular, found inspiration for this ministry of sanctuary in the powerful message of 1 Peter. As I look at this three decade-long experience in retrospect, I have come to learn how writings with a message like that of 1 Peter have sustained the hopes and motivated the steadfastness of communities very different from my mainstream Lutheranism. Looking at 1 Peter and the early Christian movement

through the lenses of anthropological and sociological studies of traditional cultures and reform movements, I came to the conclusion that 1 Peter, like most of the New Testament writings, was the product of a sectarian community, a messianic sect of Israel with what sociologists would describe as a sectarian view of itself and its relation to society. 1 Peter emphasizes that the company of believers, depicted as a reborn, sanctified, and transformed family of God, has a distinctive communal identity as the elect and holy people of God which sets it apart from its society. This holy community is called to obedience to the Holy One and has been redeemed by the blood of the holy lamb, Jesus Christ who suffered and was rejected by his contemporaries. Those who follow him can also expect hostility and rejection and suffering because through faith and allegiance to Jesus Christ they share in both the suffering and the divine vindication of their resurrected Lord. As the suffering Christ was elected, exalted and raised to God's right hand of honor and glory, so they too as his innocently suffering followers, if they remain faithful and loyal will also be saved, vindicated, and glorified by the God of glory. Consequently, this household of God and brotherhood in the faith can and must live a life of holy non-conformity and can and must remain holy because the God who called it is holy. This holiness, moreover, manifested in doing what is right in fidelity to the will of God will also be infectious and contagious. The holy and honorable life that believers lead even has the power to move its erstwhile critics and detractors to glorify God on the day of visitation. In the meantime this Christian community is to stand firm in the grace of God and resist the encroachments of the Devil and a demonic society seeking to engulf and "devour" the brotherhood. This letter acknowledges that its readers are indeed displaced and demeaned strangers and resident aliens in a hostile society and should remain so. For in the household of God, they have found a home for the homeless.

From antiquity onwards humans have understood that holiness was like a forcefield that could positively or negatively affect all in its path.

The similarity between these first-century strangers in their own land and the estranged and persecuted Christians of El Salvador is hard to miss, even though the former were not yet the victims of violent government persecution and hit squads. If, in fact, we were to accept the TEV translation of *parepidêmoi* (1:1 and 2:11) as "refugees," the similarity of first and twentieth-century situations would be even stronger. In both cases, nevertheless, it was the most vulnerable class—peasants who because of their inferior economic and social status and their Christian unwillingness to "go along with the program"—who were demeaned, denounced, displaced, and exposed to unjust suffering. And in both instances, these Christians and their supporters met the challenge with resolute faith and courage and songs of joy on their lips.

This theological vision of the Christ, Christian community, and culture that we find in 1 Peter is described in that classic

1951 study of H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, as the stance of "Christ Against Culture." In modern time and advanced Western societies such a stance typifies that of persecuted Christian minorities, protest movements, and so-called "exotic sects" on the margins of mainstream Christendom. In fact, one such marginal American group, the Amish, cite a passage of 1 Peter as expressing their *raison d'etre*: "You are a chosen race, God's own special people called from darkness into light" (2:9). But this understanding of Christian existence is hardly representative of Christian mainstreamers crowding the corridors of power. Such a sectarian message comes across as strange and unsettling news to a church which has made its faustian pact and compromises with society. What are we to do today with 1 Peter's notion of holy nonconformity, its call to a superior morality which might even gain outsiders to the faith, its message of standing fast in God's grace and resistance to the demonic powers that threaten to devour us? It is small wonder that 1 Peter is accorded so little attention in contemporary sermons and Bible classes and that contemporary theologians pay it virtually no attention.

But in times when the church is called upon to finally stand up and be counted, to pay the cost of discipleship, to put its material resources and carpeted sanctuaries on the line, to offer community and support to society's strangers, then it seems the message of 1 Peter comes alive with power and life. Many of us across the globe sense that we today are living in such a time. The "fiery trial" of which 1 Peter speaks (4:12) for most of us is not so much a case of persecution by outsiders as it is of collusion with the enemy, capitulation to consumerism, the profit motive, and the commodification of life itself, conformity to values diametrically opposed to a gospel celebrating God's favor toward the poor and disenfranchised, and complacency toward global evil on a grand and horrifying scale. We, the United States and the industrialized nations, make and sell the bombs and bullets for the more than forty wars now underway around the globe. We Christian people train the torturers. We help create and then refuse the refugees. The old Evil Foe is devouring us and we drown the news with our Walkmans. The world indeed is too much with us. In the immortal words of an American cartoon icon, "we have met the enemy and they is us." At least one positive feature of the struggle around sanctuary has been the unmasking of corporate America's true opposition to the gospel and the opportunity it has given the church to actually be a holy community in a wholly unredeemed society. The same is true, we might add, concerning the lip service paid to "family values" and the actual efforts afoot in the corridors of power to undermine what little stability many families on the edge of poverty still possess. How alien 1 Peter's exaltation of the household and the home as the core model of Christian identity, cohesion, love and union with God appears to be in an environment today when divorce rather than cohesion, abuse rather than love, flight from parents and children rather than rootage in one's family's history and continuity, are chief among the sicknesses of our age, when the family is seen as anything but a healthy and hopeful image of one's relation to God or to one's sisters and brothers in the faith, when Christian communities see themselves as anything but homes for the homeless, when the most popular family model today is not the Holy Family or the Christian family of the reborn children of God but the Simpsons or the Bundys.

But non-conformity is still possible. Sanctuary, we have seen, does work. Christian communities can indeed be actual as

well as symbolical homes for the homeless. Holiness is always a contagious power whenever we give it a try. Whether we actually do so or not will probably be related to our openness to unpopular writings like 1 Peter and its message of a church called to holiness, solidarity, and empowering witness in a fragmented, conflictive, and decidedly unholy world.

Earlier versions of this essay were presented at Luther Seminary, Adelaide, South Australia, and Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA.

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The God of Peace in Romans: Reflections on Crucial Lutheran Texts

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The phrase, "the God of Peace," appears in Rom 15:33 and 16:20 in contexts that imply opposite definitions. In the former, the God of peace eliminates conflicts between groups by evangelical reconciliation that produces mutual welcome of competitive groups, whereas in the latter, peace is achieved by stamping out dissension perceived to be demonic. The fact that Rom 16:17-20 provides the decisive basis of Missouri and Wisconsin Synod resistance against worship or fellowship with those perceived to stand in tension with their interpretation of the Christian confession[1] provides a particular poignancy to this issue. To salute Edgar G. Krentz, who was part of the Seminex movement that departed from Concordia Seminary twenty-five years ago, I would like to continue my effort to grapple with this issue.[2] How does the concept of divine peace relate to the gospel of Christ crucified, a gospel that sets right a human race whose twisted systems of competition, boasting, honor, and shame[3] have made conflict, even between fellow Christians, a chronic reality? What light could the reinterpretation of these references shed on our ecumenical situation today?

We open this inquiry with an analysis of Rom 5:1, which has long played a deci-

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[1] See P. E. Kretzmann, "Zu Röm. 16, 17f.," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 4 (1933) 413-24; Karl Koehler, "The Battle for Romans 16:17-20," *Faith-Life* 15.5 (May, 1942) 11-15; 15.6 (June 1942) 1, 12-16; 15.7 (July 1942) 1, 12-15; Edward W. A. Koehler, *Romans 16:17-20* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1946); Martin H. Franzmann, "Exegesis on Romans 16:17ff.," *Concordia Journal* 7 (1981) 13-20; R. W. Kraemer, *The Interpretation of Romans 16:17-20 in Ecclesiology* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1968); other mimeographed writings on this topic are listed by Robert George Hoerber, *A Grammatical Study of Romans 16:17* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1948), 3.

[2] See my initial analysis of this event in "The Gospel as Heresy: Concordia Seminary in Exile," *The Christian Century* 91 (March 27, 1974) 336-40.

[3] This carries forward my study, "Honor and Shame in the Argument of Romans," pp. 257-72 in A. Brown, G. F. Snyder and V. Wiles, eds., *Putting Body and Soul Together: Essays in Honor of Robin Scroggs* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1997).

sive role in Lutheran interpretation.

Romans 5:1 and righteousness through faith as the basis of peace with God

The admonition to have "peace with God" plays a crucial role in the argument of Romans by setting the theme of the second proof of chapters 5-8 that deals with "the implications and objections to the doctrine of the righteousness of God conveyed by Christ."[4] This pericope provides both an introduction to the themes of Romans 5-8 and a development of the preceding argument.[5] A problem for interpreters, however, has been to make sense of the peculiar references to "boasting" in this passage, where Paul appears to claim that Christians routinely boast in their hope and in their sufferings, which stands in some dissonance to the actual experience of Roman Christians both internally and externally. This problem would be eliminated if the text-critical decision about the reading of 5:1 were made on methodical grounds.

Although many interpreters and the committees controlling the standard Greek texts of our day believe the context of 5:1 favors the indicative translation, "we have peace with God," the more strongly attested subjunctive form should be accepted.[6] It should be translated as a hortatory subjunctive, "let us have peace with God." The rejection of this evidence on the assumption of what the context requires is highly subjective, resting on an exegetical legacy that has always stressed the doctrinal objectivity of Romans and downplayed its situational orientation. The implication of the current consensus favoring the indicative is that only those who have the right doctrine of justification by faith enjoy peace with God. Although this implication is strongly favored by some branches of the Lutheran exegetical tradition, it stands in tension both with the text-critical evidence and with the argument of this letter as a whole. It invites a form of theological boasting that vitiates the force of Paul's intention. On the basis of Stanley E. Porter's recent demonstration of the superiority of the subjunctive reading,[7] this verse needs to be translated as follows:

> Therefore, having been set right by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. . .

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[4] Jewett, "Following the Argument of Romans," in K. P. Donfried, *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 273.

[5] See Nils A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 82, 88-90; Wilckens, *Römer*, 286f., in particular, points out the significant connections between 5:1-11 and the preceding four chapters. Neil Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism*, JSNTSup 45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990) 226 contends that "Romans 5 is the pivot on which the letter's argument turns," because it channels the argument of the preceding four chapters into the new life described in succeeding chapters.

[6] The subjunctive ἔχωμεν is found in ℵ* A B* C D K L 33 63 81 181 436 630 1175 1962 1985 M^{pt} $\mathfrak{p}^{597,599}$ $it^{d,dem,e,f,g,t,x}$ lat vg $sy^{p,pal}$ bo arm eth Marcion Tert Or^{lat} Ambst Titus-Bostra Chr $Cyr^{1/4}$ Euthalius Thret John-Damascus and thus has "far better external support" (Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament*, third edition [New York: United Bible Societies, 1975], 511) than the indicative ἔχωμεν in ℵ¹ B² F G P Ψ 0220^{vid} 88 104 326 330 365 629 1241 1506 1739 1877 1881 1984 2127 2464 2492 2495 *pm* M^{pt} *Lect* $it^{ar,vid,z*}$ vg^{mss} sy^{h} sa Ephr Did Epiph $Cyr^{3/4}$ Sedulius Scotus.

[7] Stanley Porter, "The Argument of Romans 5: Can a Rhetorical Question Make a Difference?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 (1991) 662-65.

After summing up the burden of Rom 1:16–4:25 by the clause, "having been set right by faith," Paul turns to the agenda of elaborating the implications. The text critical decision in favor of the hortatory subjunctive, "let us have peace," has a significant effect on the interpretation of this entire pericope, indeed of the entire second proof. Rather than a theoretical argument about the possession of peace and hope by Christians holding the right belief as traditionally assumed, it now becomes a discussion of the concrete embodiment of faith in the life of the Christian movement as a whole. The theme of obligation is much more strongly felt if the exhortative subjunctive in 5:1 is translated in similar ways in 5:2, 3 and 11.[8] Given the discussion of the aggressive campaign of the human race to suppress the truth about God and enter into boastful competition with the creator, which resulted in social discord and alienation (1:18-32), the reference to "peace with God" has a comprehensive implication that bears directly on the conflicts within the Roman Christian community. The term "peace" refers explicitly to such internal difficulties in 14:19. The boasting in the achievement of honor that led the human race to chronic conflict is here replaced by a new form of boasting: in the "hope of the glory of God" restored by Christ, and "in the afflictions" shared with Christ which lead to "perseverance" and "hope." The proper form of the "boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (5:11)," relying on "grace" (5:2) rather than in the achievements of self or group, stands in contrast to the arrogant boasting in 2:17.[9] As E. A. Judge has shown, the quest for personal glory was considered the only proper ambition for educated people in the Greco-Roman world, for in Cicero's words, "The better a man is, the more he is led by glory."[10] When one follows the logic of the four exhortations in 5:1, 2, 3, and 11, it becomes clear that peace is coordinated with a new form of boasting that replaces the competition for honor that marks the fallen world.

In the second half of this pericope, which opens with the objection of an imaginary interlocutor in 5:6-7,[11] there are four references to the status of persons and groups whose sinful quest for honor required the death of Christ. Two of these references are found in 5:6, "while we were still weak..." Christ died "for the ungodly." Commentators have been puzzled by Paul's seemingly untheological[12] and overly "mild"[13] choice

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[8] See Otto Kuss, *Der Römerbrief übersetzt und erklärt* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1963) 200-05; his excursus on boasting in 219-24 lifts up the contrast between distorted human boasting in accomplishments and status and the new form of boasting in Christ.

[9] See James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary 38a (Dallas: Word, 1988) 261.

[10] See E. A. Judge, "The Conflict of Educational Aims in New Testament Thought," *Journal of Christian Education* 9 (1966) 33-38; his citation from Cicero is drawn from *Pro Archia* XI. 26. See also Judge, "Paul's Boasting in Relation to Contemporary Professional Practice," *Australian Biblical Review* 16 (1968) 37-50.

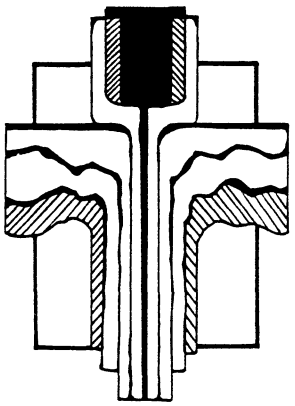
[11] Stanley K. Stowers uses the expression "imaginary interlocutor" to depict an educator's or orator's conversation partner in a diatribe who raises objections or draws false conclusions to which the educator responds. See *The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans*, SBLDS 57 (Chico: Scholars, 1981) 79-118. Neither in this study nor in his more recent *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale, 1994) does he identify 5:6-7 as assigned to such an interlocutor, but the nature of the rhetorical question in 5:6 and the rather contradictory arguments from common sense in 5:7 make this seem likely to me.

[12] Dunn, *Romans*, 254.

[13] John C. O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, Pelikan New Testament Commentaries (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 93.

of the term ἀσθενής ("weak") in this sentence, but it would have resonated powerfully within the honor-shame framework of the audience. The unwillingness to acknowledge human vulnerability and inadequate social status was a major component in the suppression of the truth described in 1:18, because it leads to exaggerating the human honor to the point of displacing the Creator in 1:25. While Paul reminded his Corinthian audience that not many of them had been "powerful" by worldly standards prior to their conversion and that "God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor 1:26-27), here he includes all of his listeners in the plural formulation, whether of high or low social class. In the incessant competition for honor, even the mightiest are shown to be weak when they lose, even momentarily, so that the claim of "celestial glory" is a distortion of the truth. Paul's premise that human weakness is the springboard for dishonest claims of honor endows this passage with an excess of meaning that could be correlated with recent insights about social and personal psychology.

The three remaining references to the "impious," to "sinners," and to "enemies" all relate to the hostile campaign of the human race to displace God's honor and glory with their own. The wording correlates well with the theme of redirecting boasting that runs like a thread through this passage. This is why salvation is depicted in 5:10 as "reconciliation," which implies that the need for reconciliation lies with the human race, not with God. It is humans who have made war on God, not God on us. Paul's argument is to accept the peace settlement brought by the blood of Christ, and then to cease the wars against God and our fellow humans. This has a bearing on the theological wars within and between our Christian denominations as well as on the



conflicts between ethnic groups in countries around the world. Its primary bearing for the Roman house and tenement churches, however, was on the ethnic, liturgical, theological conflicts within the Christian community itself. If the Roman congregations could follow Paul's invitation to "boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we now have received the reconciliation" (5:11), they will have taken up Paul's stance in 1:16 of not being "ashamed of the gospel."

Romans 15:33 and the God of Peace acting through the gospel

The appeal to participate in Paul's missionary struggle to unify the church and pacify the world through the gospel (Rom 15:14-33) is effectively concluded with a benediction referring to the God of peace. Jeffrey Weima has recently argued that the particle δέ ["but, and"] in the peace benediction signals the beginning of the letter closing,[14]

[14] Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings*, JSNTSup 101 (Sheffield:

but as in 1 Thess 5:23 and 2 Thess 3:16, the benediction appears to summarize and conclude the preceding discussion while having a less direct relationship with the immediately succeeding recommendation of Phoebe.[15] The argumentative function of the benediction was aptly described by Godet as suggested to Paul "by his conviction of the hostilities and dangers lying before himself, and by the need of soon being in full peace in the midst of his readers."[16] The expression "the God of peace" indicates the divine "source and giver of peace" and conveys the wish that such peace be given to the Roman Christians.[17] The wish is implicit, however, and the lack of a finite verb differentiates this benediction from LXX forms such as 2 Kings 24:23, Κύριος ὁ θεός σου εὐλογήσαι σε ("the Lord your God bless you"). Outside of the New Testament, the only occurrence of this exact expression is in the *Testament of Dan* 5:1-2,[18] where it deals with conflicts within the faith community:

> Observe the Lord's commandments,
> then, my children...
> Each of you speak truth clearly to his
> neighbor,
> and do not fall into pleasure
> and troublemaking,
> but be at peace, holding to the
> *God of peace.*
> Thus no conflict will overwhelm you.

In contrast to the suggestion that conflicts should be resolved by following the law more carefully, Paul understands peace as the activity of God through the gospel, that transforms antagonists and makes coopera-

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JSOT, 1994) 88-90, 220. Weima makes a good point that the connective καί is used with the peace benedictions of 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9 and Gal 6:16, indicating a distinction from benedictions introduced by δέ. But he cannot make a consistent case because no adversative significance is claimed for the peace benediction introduced by δέ in 16:20 (see 228-29).

[15] See Otto Roller, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe. Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom antiken Briefe* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933), 196; Jewett, "The Form and Function of the Homiletic Benediction," *Anglican Theological Review* 6 (1969) 22-23. The adversative force of δέ that Weima takes as the sign of a new pericope is substantially undercut by the fact that the pericope of 15:22-33 has four other occurrences of this particle, none of which indicates the beginning of a new pericope. Most Romans commentators perceive that 15:33 concludes the preceding pericope; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: Clark, 1975-1979), 779-80 provides the exception, but unlike Weima, he does not understand verse 33 as opening a new section of the letter.

[16] Fréderic Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Funk & Wagnals, 1883; repr. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 486. In contrast, Marie-Joseph Lagrange denies any link with the congregational situation in *Saint Paul. Èpître aux Romains*, ÉtBib (Paris: Gabalda, 1915, 1922, 1931 with addenda. Repr. 1950), 361.

[17] See Weima, *Neglected Endings*, 91-92; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 727. Gerhard Delling places this benediction in the context of the argument of Romans, which defined peace in 5:1; 8:6; and 14:17 in terms of "salvation in its fullness" in "Die Bezeichnung 'Gott des Friedens' und ähnliche Wendungen in den Paulusbriefen," in E. E. Ellis and E. Grässer, eds., *Jesus und Paulus. Festschrift für Werner Georg Kummel zum 70. Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975) 79. This appears to overlook the context of ethnic tensions that are the immediate context of 15:33.

[18] See Delling, "Gott des Friedens," 77-78; for a discussion of the broader Jewish background of this expression, see Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, MeyerK 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978, 14th ed.) 468.

tion possible. The inclusive reference to πάντων ὑμῶν ("all of you"), unique to this particular peace benediction as compared with the rest of the New Testament letters,[19] echoes the inclusive address in Rom 1:6-7, where the theme of peace for all is also found. In this context, at the conclusion of Paul's plea for prayer concerning the Jerusalem offering that was intended to unify the ethnic branches of the early church, the "all" would be understood to include the Jewish as well as the Gentile branches of the church in Rome.[20]

Peace achieved through the elimination of enemies in the interpolation of Rom 16:20

A completely different ethos confronts us in Rom 16:17-20. The grounds on which I would identify this material as a non-Pauline interpolation are briefly as follows:[21]

1. These verses produce an egregious break in the flow and tone of Paul's discourse. The greetings that dominate the chapter from verses 1 through 16 are marked by collegiality and inclusiveness, a tone that is picked up again in verses 21-23. The commentators who insist on the authenticity of verses 17-20 find it impossible to explain the extreme change of mood, the angry tone of denunciation, and the sharp breaks in the flow at the beginning and end of this section. Even the defenders of authenticity such as Douglas Moo acknowledge the "abrupt interruption" of these verses,[22] while Joseph Fitzmyer admits that "there is nothing in the immediately preceding context that calls for" this material.[23]

2. These verses contain direct contradictions to the preceding argument of Romans. Whereas 14:1 calls for unconditionally welcoming members of other Christian groups who differ in theology and liturgy, 16:17 flatly demands that such people be "avoided." Whereas 12:1-2 affirms the presence of transformed intellect in the congregation, capable of "rational worship," 16:18 stereotypes intellectual gifts as "fair and flattering words." Whereas Rom 1:12 had referred to the Romans and Paul mutually strengthening each other, acknowledg-

Commentators who insist on the authenticity of verses 17-20 find it impossible to explain the extreme change of mood...

[19] See Weima's useful chart of the seven Pauline peace benedictions in *Neglected Endings*, 89.

[20] See Weima, *Neglected Endings*, 95-96.

[21] See K. Erbes, "Zeit und Ziel der Grüsse Röm 16,3-15 und der Mitteilungen 2. Tim 4,9-21," *ZNW* 10 (1909) 146; John Knox, "The Epistle to the Romans," *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 9 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954) 664; Walter Schmithals, "The False Teachers of Romans 16:17-20," pp. 219-38 in Walter Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972); John C. O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, Pelikan New Testament Commentaries (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975) 252-53; Wolf-Hennig Ollrog,"Die Abfassungsverhältlisse von Röm 16," in D. Lührmann & G. Strecker, eds., *Kirche: Festschrift Günther Bornkamm zum 75. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1980) 330-34; Jewett, *Christian Tolerance: Paul's Message to the Modern Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982) 17-23.

[22] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 929.

[23] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 745.

The rhetoric and argumentative style of this paragraph are very different from other Pauline passages that interact with heresy...

ing in 15:14 that they are "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another," in 16:20 he calls for absolute "obedience." This authoritarian reference stands in considerable tension with the distinctive expression used twice in Romans, the "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5; 16:26). Whereas Rom 1:18–3:9 offered definitive proof that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," and Rom 7:7-25 shows the ambiguity of all human motivations, 16:19 expects the audience to be "innocent as far as evil is concerned." And, as I will spell out in detail below, the expression "God of peace" is used here with a connotation that is directly opposed to its use in 15:33.

3. The rhetoric and vocabulary of this section are non-Pauline. Wolf-Hennig Ollrog counts 7 Pauline *hapax legomena* in this short section, strongly suggesting non-Pauline provenance.[24] Other words are used in this passage with definitions that are atypical for his ordinary usage.[25] The typical blessing formula in Paul's letters uses the optative verb, as in 15:13 "May the God of hope fill you...," but in 15:20 we have an unparalleled future verb: "God will crush Satan under your feet." Historical certainty here replaces the mysterious sovereignty of God whose judgments are "unsearchable" and whose ways are "inscrutable" according to the hymn of Rom 11:33-36. Moreover, in the authentic Pauline letters, it is Christ rather than believers who defeats the demonic forces (1 Cor 15:23-26; 2 Thess 2:8). The rhetoric and argumentative style of this paragraph are very different from other Pauline passages that interact with heresy: there is no discussion of doctrinal or ethical issues; the *ad hominem* references are generic and lack the kind of argumentation typical of Pauline letters. The style of anti-heretical discourse matches the Pastoral Epistles and Ignatian letters rather than the other authentic Pauline letters.[26] In contrast to other authentic Pauline critiques of heretics, the details are so "broad and nonspecific"[27] that current commentators give up the attempt at precise identification of these opponents as "almost impossible."[28]

4. Finally, there is a plausible redactional rationale for an interpolation at this precise location, even though it obviously

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[24] Ollrog, "Abfassungsverhältnisse," 230 lists ἐκκλίνειν ("turn away, avoid," used otherwise only in a citation by Paul), χρηστολογία ("smooth speech"), ἄκακος ("innocence"), ἀφικέομαι ("reach"), συντριβεῖν ("crush"), ἐν τάχει ("quickly"), εὐλογία (in the sense of "well chosen words, false eloquence").

[25] Ollrog, "Abfassungsverhältnisse," 230 refers to διδαχή, used here not in the sense of a charismatic gift (1 Cor 14:6, 26) but as an established doctrine. I would add that the word σκάνδαλον, used by Paul always in the singular, appears in verse 17 in the plural.

[26] See Ollrog, "Abfassungsverhältnisse," 231.

[27] Dunn, *Romans*, 904.

[28] Moo, *Romans*, 929; see also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 745; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Reading the New Testament Series (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 222.

interrupts the series of greetings. Verse 16 had urged the Romans to adopt a widely inclusive policy: "Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you." Although this broad inclusivity is consistent with the final three chapters of Romans, it is radically restricted by verses 17-20. These verses set a firm limit on those who should be greeted as legitimate members of the Christian family, which was the original significance of the kiss.[29]

The likelihood of interpolation explains why the phrase "God of peace" appears in Rom 16:20 with a connotation so far removed from Rom 15:33. That "the God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet" clearly implies that peace is achieved as God allows believers to "tread Satan under their feet."[30] In Werner Foerster's words, "God will do it, but He does it through the community."[31] As the community of faith deals forcefully with heretics, they achieve divine peace. But it is not peace in the form of reconciliation between former enemies, as implied throughout the earlier argument of Romans. The background of the wording of 16:20 is clearly the holy war tradition: as believers crush their enemies under foot, they achieve peace.[32] The *Testament of Levi* 18:12 promises that after the apocalyptic battle, the Lord "shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits." In this case, however, the phrase ἐν τάχει ("quickly, without delay") implies a victory gained quickly after the commencement of the church's anti-heretical actions,[33] prior to any eschatological battle.[34] The secular parallels are very close at this point. In the great frieze at the temple in Pergamon, Aphrodite is shown with her foot on the face of the opponent she has just killed. Similarly Isis is depicted with the entire globe under her foot. The familiar scene in Roman arenas throughout the empire was the victorious gladiator placing his foot on the neck of a vanquished opponent and waiting for the signal either to dispatch him or allow him to go free. The choice of the verb συντρίβω ("shatter, crush") leaves no doubt about the extreme methods required to subdue the church's enemies. The word is used in connection with mistreating people, beating them severely, bruising them, or annihilating them in battle.[35] For example Judas Maccabeus uses this verb 23 times in contexts such as reassuring his followers when facing a numerically superior foe, "And the Lord himself will crush them before our face" (1 Macc 3:22).

The appeal of this passage to various strands of the Christian tradition is unmistakable. In numerous wars against heretical groups, in the burning of heretics, and in political campaigns to exclude allegedly heretical members and groups from church associations, Christian leaders have long believed they were crushing Satan underfoot. But whether this form of peace is consistent with the gospel proclaimed

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[29] See Klaus Thraede, "Ursprünge und Formen des 'Heiligen Kusses' im frühen Christentum," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 11-12 (1968-69) 123-43; Stephen Benko, "The Kiss," in S. Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1984), 98.

[30] Georg Bertram, "συντρίβω κτλ," *TDNT* 7 (1971) 924.

[31] Werner Foerster, "σατανᾶς," *TDNT* 7 (1971) 161.

[32] See Peter W. Macky, "Crushing Satan Underfoot (Romans 16:20)—Paul's Last Battle Story as True Myth," *Proceedings: Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies* 13 (1993) 121-33.

[33] Godet, *Romans*, 499.

[34] See Franz-J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. H. Knight (London: Lutterworth, 1961), 386.

[35] See Bertram, "συντρίβω κτλ," 920-22.

throughout the rest of Romans is a matter of grave concern.

The challenge of interpretation

Even though probably an interpolation, the reference to the "God of peace" in Romans 16:20 remains canonical. It needs to be taken into account and respected, even if it was not written by the Apostle Paul. It stands in the same tradition as the Pastoral Epistles, Jude, and 2 Peter. The church discovered that there are times when lines have to be drawn, when genuine heresy must be discerned and rejected. The problem is that this process is so frequently carried out without regard to the penetrating argument of Romans. The gospel of Christ crucified and resurrected exposes the universal human propensity toward competition for honor and power that so easily corrupts the discernment of heresy. The God of peace in Rom 1:1–15:33 counters the tendency to believe that my group is inherently superior to your group, my theology to yours. That is why Paul argues so strenuously for new attitudes on the part of the weak and strong in Romans 14-15. Even though the strong are now in the majority position, and are in a position to exclude their competitors, Paul urges that mutual welcome and the "holy kiss" should continue to bond them together as siblings in faith. The gospel thus undermines in a decisive manner the assumption that Christian groups are always required by the God of peace to damn and crush each other in order to achieve peace through removal. It places a massive barrier against reducing the process of heretical discernment to power politics, with the majority simply crushing diversity as satanic.

Part of the challenge of interpreting these references to the God of peace is discerning the times. While the borderline situation of extreme danger to the faith such as Rom 16:17-20 addresses is occasionally present, the tendency has been to enlarge this mode of violent exclusion into an abiding aspect of church policy toward diversity and dissent. In the case of the attack on the Concordia faculty that led to the founding of Seminex, questions about peripheral matters such as Noah's ark and synoptic contradictions became confused with the gospel, raising them to the level of heresy. The same tragic mistake is now being made in the Southern Baptist seminaries, while in other denominations, both liberal and conservative factions are treating each other as heretics. A case can be made, especially for denominations loyal to the legacy of Romans, that the basic stance toward dissent favored by the gospel is that of Rom 14:1–16:16 in which the weak and strong are admonished to welcome and honor each other.

The question we must confront in interpreting Romans is which form of peace should be pursued between diverse groups of believers when heresy is in fact not involved. To put it another way, which form of peace is consistent at the deepest level with the gospel? I would contend that it is the kind of peace that God provides through the death and resurrection of Christ, the peace declared in Rom 1:1–16:16, and in 16:21-27.

The Hidden Humor of St. Paul

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It is not usual to see these two entities coordinated, St. Paul and humor. After all, St. Paul is the eager, earnest, and serious apostle whose theology is presented in his seven uncontested letters. He argues severely and passionately for the correctness of his gospel, against all opponents who maintain varied and different viewpoints contrary to his own. The combination of St. Paul and humor is so unusual that a search in the ATLA Religion Database produced only three hits, one in English, one in German, and one in French; the Internet was also no help. The French article deals with Acts 26:28-29 and therefore may not reflect Paul himself.[1] The English article deals primarily with irony.[2] Aida Spencer defines irony according to Richard Lanham as "expressing a meaning directly opposite that intended: ...Generally speaking, the more sophisticated the irony, the more is implied, the less stated."[3] Spencer discusses 2 Cor 11:16–12:13. The third article will be mentioned later on in this paper. Because Edgar M. Krentz is both a devotee of St. Paul and a person with a delightful sense of humor, it seemed appropriate to devote this article to this subject. It must be stated that some of the passages to be mentioned can be interpreted as very serious, but I wonder if Paul sometimes wrote with tongue in cheek which brought a smile to recipients' faces as they listened to the letters read to them.

There are very fine lines of distinction among humor, wit, repartee, irony, and sarcasm. It seems to me that Paul uses humor, irony, and sarcasm. Repartee would not easily be detectable in a written document. The definition of irony quoted above can be accepted. Sarcasm usually has the intention of wounding or ridiculing the opponent. Humor can grow naturally and just causes laughter, perhaps without any underlying intention.

Play with words

Someone said that the pun is the lowest form of humor. A few puns can be found in Paul's letters, although puns are not obvious in the English translation. In Rom 1:28, Paul plays with δοκιμ-: "Since they did not see fit (ἐδοκίμασαν) to acknowledge God,

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[1] Paul Harle, "Un 'Private-Joke' de Paul dans le livre des Actes (26:28-29)," *New Testament Studies* 24 (July 1978), 527-33.

[2] Aida Besançon Spencer, "The Wise Fool (and the Foolish Wise), A Study of Irony in Paul," *NT* 23 (Oct 1981), 349-60.

[3] Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 61.

I wonder if Paul sometimes wrote with tongue in cheek which brought a smile to recipients' faces as they listened to the letters read to them.

God gave them up to a debased (ἀδόκιμον) mind."

In the same way, he plays with κριν- in Rom 2:1-2: "Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you *judge* others; for in passing *judgment* on another you *condemn* (κατακρίνεις) yourself, because you, the *judge*, are doing the very same thing. You say, 'We know that God's *judgment*....'"

Or in Rom 12:3, it is the stem φρον- which is used in various ways. The NRSV uses "think" three times, but in the Greek there are four occurrences. You have to hear it in Greek: μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν παρ' ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν. If it were the same word, it would be poor style, but by using compound verbs, Paul shows his playfulness.

The name Onesimus in the letter to Philemon means "useful." So it is a humorous statement when Paul says about him in v. 11, "Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me."

A striking expression is used by Paul in Rom 2:5. θησαυρίζω is a word which from its etymology indicates the collection of a treasure, something valuable from which one expects to achieve some gain, but here Paul speaks of storing up wrath. This ironic use underscores the extreme sinfulness of the actions castigated. Who wants to collect damaging items?

Sarcastic and ironic remarks

Hans von Campenhausen speaks of a "gruesome joke" of Paul in Gal 5:12.[4] Paul is so angry that he wishes that the advocates of circumcision would castrate themselves. The ASV puts it more modestly: "I wish that they... would even go beyond circumcision." I think it is unnecessary to illustrate this image further. His humor here has become extreme sarcasm.

A pun on the Greek word for circumcision is found in another angry passage in Phil 3:2-3, Βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν. ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή. The English translation cannot reproduce this play on words but has to say, "Beware of those who mutilate the flesh! For it is we who are the circumcision." We might see another irony here, for Paul who opposes circumcision for the Gentiles, says nevertheless that the Christians are the true circumcision!

The reverse of circumcision is mentioned in Rom 2:25. The physical improbability is transferred into the spiritual realm and demonstrates the seriousness of the behavior of the circumcised.

Another sarcastic passage is found in Rom 2:17-23 where Paul accuses fellow Jews of committing exactly all the sins they

[4] Hans Von Campenhausen, "Ein Witz des Apostels Paulus und die Anfänge des christlichen Humors," Von Campenhausen, H., *Aus der Frühzeit des Christentums* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1963), 104.

preach and teach against. I am sure Paul is aware that not all Jews act this way and that he is exaggerating in order to make a point. But the irony is intended to provoke humility and understanding among his opponents.

I think that Rom 6:17 can also be understood as irony or humor. Most English translations avoid the literal statement of Paul which is found in the translation of Käsemann's commentary on Romans: "But thanks be to God that you were the slaves of sin but have now become obedient from the heart."[5] Can Paul really thank God that they were once slaves of sin? The translators usually insert an "although," or at least imply this; NRSV: "thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient." But Paul, in a humorous statement, thanks God for their prior slavery to sin, for the sake of the contrast with their new obedience.

It is ironic how Paul talks to the Corinthians about their going before Gentile judges in 1 Cor 6:1-6. Will they really judge angels? The whole section sounds quite humorous and ironic.

In Rom 9:20, Paul asks a humorous question: "Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, 'Why have you made me like this?'" as if a pot could speak. It points out the ridiculousness of people who argue with God.

A similar impossibility is indicated in the passage concerning the unity of the body in 1 Cor 12:15-21 as if the foot could speak to the hand and the ear to the eye. Such statements can cause a smile on listeners' faces. And how about v. 17? "If the whole body were an eye...."

The building materials in 1 Cor 3:12 are also funny. Who would build with gold, silver, precious stones, (wood,) hay, straw? The impossibility drives home the point of responsibility for one's actions.

Litotes is a stylistic means by which one affirms a fact by denying the opposite. This also is humorous to a certain extent. Paul uses it a few times. Galatians 5:23 is especially striking. After listing all kinds of good fruits of the Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, etc., Paul says, "There is no law against such things." Well, of course not! Do I dare mention Rom 1:16 in this connection? "For I am not ashamed of the gospel"? Of course not, Paul is proud of it!

Comparisons

Jesus is famous for his effective use of parables, while Paul does not tell any parables and sometimes seems a little awkward in his use of comparisons. In Rom 7:2-4 he speaks of the wife who is free from the law when her husband dies. But then he applies it in a quite different way to the believers: You have died to the law. The application has shifted the literal comparison in a humorous fashion.

Another infelicitous comparison is frequently pointed out in Rom 11:17ff. Lietzmann and Dodd called Paul a child of the city because it is not agricultural practice to graft a wild olive shoot on the good olive tree but exactly the other way around. Interpreters have attempted to explain Paul's error or to put the emphasis on "contrary to nature" in v. 24. But Paul may very well have known the usual practice in grafting and changed it in a humorous way in order to convince the Gentiles that they should not boast. Sometimes a lighter vein may understand Paul better than a correct literal interpretation.

There is another comparison or metaphor in Gal 2:9 which also might be meant humorously: James and Cephas and John,

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[5] Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 171.

One can achieve more with a smile than a frown.

who were acknowledged pillars, although the metaphorical use is found in Euripides (for male children), Paul may very well have used it in a humorous way, as if pillars could shake hands! This does not exclude the serious meaning that they are really the people on whom the church or at least the responsibility for the church rests and that their approval of Paul confirms the correctness of his teaching. The statement that it makes no difference to him what they actually were (2:6) also is ironic. Of course Paul cares, and he does not intend to undermine their status because then their approval would be meaningless.[6]

Humor directed at Paul himself

Paul frequently jokes in regard to himself. He wants to visit Rome in the worst way. (It turns out that it really became the worst way, namely as a prisoner.) So he uses the excuse that he has no more room to work in "these regions" (Rom 15:23). Even if the geographical knowledge of the Romans may not have been excellent, they knew that the East is a large area and that not every city had heard Paul preach.

In 1 Cor 1:13, he asks facetiously, "Was Paul crucified for you?" Of course, the answer to this rhetorical question is quite clear. It is also amusing how he in 1:16 confesses his possible forgetfulness, "beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else." Did Paul really forget?

Designating himself as rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things (4:13) seems a humorous exaggeration in reference to Paul himself who at the beginning of the letter appeals to the congregation as "called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." And again, he deprecates himself in 15:8, when he calls himself "one untimely born." Even if the suggestion of the Harper Collins Study Bible that this expression for an unusual birth may have been first used about Paul's conversion by his critics should be correct,[7] the fact that Paul quotes it shows his sense of humor.

Can you really imagine Paul coming to the Corinthians with a stick (4:21)? Was he going to beat them? After Paul had been in Corinth for such a relatively long time, the Corinthians probably knew him quite well and could accept such humorous or even ridiculous statements from him and understand what his real intention was.

An ironic question is put by Paul in 2 Cor 12:13. He asks the Corinthians for forgiveness that he has not taken any support from them. It crowns the section in which Paul "speaking as a fool" boasts of his sufferings and weaknesses. Does he really need forgiveness for not burdening the Corinthians? The fact that Paul says himself that he is speaking as a fool points to his humor.

He shows this sense of humor when he quotes the Corinthians' accusation against

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[6] See Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 92-95 for a detailed discussion of this verse.

[7] The HarperCollins Study Bible. New Revised Standard Version, with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 2160.

him by applying it to himself in 2 Cor 10:1, "I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!" (see 10:10).

It is quite likely that Philemon smiled when he read v. 19, "I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it." How could he, being in prison, ever hope to repay a financial debt which Onesimus had caused? Actually, the whole letter is quite ironic; Paul would like to retain Onesimus as his assistant, yet for formality's sake, he asks Philemon's permission, without actually saying so. In all these passages Paul makes comments about himself which may suggest a humorous understanding. Of course, just like beauty, the humor may be in the eye (or ear) of the beholder.

Miscellaneous

I like 1 Cor 5:10. Paul says in reference to his earlier letter, which evidently was misunderstood, that he did not mean that the Corinthians could completely separate from immoral persons. He says, "You would then need to go out of the world." Is there a place they could go outside of this world? Paul wants them to smile when they read this.

When blaming the Corinthians for the divisions at the Lord's Supper and for the rich eating their fill while neglecting the poor, he asks (1 Cor 11:22) the ironical question, "What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in?" This really should make them think about their practices.

An interesting contrast situation is mentioned in 1 Thess 2:7. Paul describes himself as gentle,[8] like a nurse or a mother, understanding the Thessalonians as children. But in v. 17, he speaks of himself as orphaned, suddenly becoming the child bereft of his parents. Such contrasts require a humorous shift in the understanding of Paul's statements.

Conclusion

We have traversed Paul's writings and found many instances of humor. To be sure, many of these occurrences may be interpreted seriously, but in looking at them as humorous they lose nothing of their meaning and power with which Paul attempts to correct problematic conditions in the congregations to which he is writing. One can achieve more with a smile than a frown. I think it is only natural to assume that Paul knew this also and used it in order to get his points across. There is nothing wrong in reading Paul and, for that matter, other parts of the New Testament, including Jesus' teachings, with an eye open to incongruity, sarcasm, and humor.

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[8] Reading ἤπιοι rather than νήπιοι.

A Tale of Two Apocalypses

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In honor of a grand colleague, Ed Krentz, I would like to offer a comparative study in early Christian apocalypticism which unites two of his main interests: the Thessalonian correspondence and the Gospel According to Matthew. In both cases we have redactions of precursor apocalyptic works which are extant, Matthew being based upon Mark, and 2 Thessalonians upon 1 Thessalonians. This provides us with an enviable and rare opportunity to trace with some certitude precisely how the later author edited his or her received source. When one compares these two "second stage," revised apocalyptic works, Matthew and 2 Thessalonians, one encounters a very striking similarity: in both cases the portrayal of the end-time salvation scene has shifted in emphasis from a depiction of the vindication and just reward of the deserving elect, to a greater concentration upon the repudiation and final destruction of the wicked. Whereas the precursor apocalyptic text in each case offered comfort to its readers in the promise of their eventual unification with their Lord, the second stage revisions provide further solace through a proleptic enjoyment of the eschatological torment of their adversaries or opponents. This striking similarity is, however, mollified by a crucial difference: whereas in 2 Thessalonians the wicked who will meet their just reward are considered to be outsiders (in fact, they are those who are presently persecuting the church), in Matthew those for whom negative eschatological judgment is promised are insiders, fellow Christians who have failed to meet the ethical standards the community remembers as set by Jesus. In both cases the historical context within which these literary and theological revisions have taken place is marked by the church's experience of persecution,[1] and its struggle to understand the delay of the parousia—the twin conditions within which the church (*ekklesia*) was seeking to formulate its identity, social forms, and ethical norms in the last decades of the first century.[2]

The purpose of this brief article is to substantiate this observation about the re-

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[1] There are two interesting verbal parallels between Matthew and 2 Thessalonians: both have an emphasis on *present* affliction (*thlipsis*) (Matt 24:9; 2 Thess 1:6-7), and on "lawlessness" (*anomia, anomos*) (Matt 24:12; 2 Thess 2:3,7, a term lacking in both their sources).

[2] Krentz also places 2 Thessalonians and Matthew (and Revelation) in the same historical context 80-100 C.E., a time of persecution ("Thessalonians, First and Second Epistles to the," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6.522).

dactional direction of the apocalyptic themes in 2 Thessalonians and Matthew by a close analysis of the revisions made, in order to draw attention to this significant editorial pattern. Then I will briefly inquire into some of the implications of this shared tendency for the possibilities for "second generation" apocalyptic theology and community living, and, in particular for the readership of this journal, to ask about the legacy of this type of apocalyptic trend for Christian preaching and theology in the final decade of this century.

2 Thessalonians, a revision of 1 Thessalonians

The relationship between the two canonical letters of Paul to the Thessalonians has been a subject of intense scholarly conversation for over two centuries. Contemporary scholarship has not achieved consensus on the question, but my study proceeds from the conclusion defended by our honoree, which I share: "In short, 2 Thessalonians is the work of a late Paulinist who rethinks Paul in terms of apocalyptic eschatology and the Pauline tradition to reinforce the fidelity of persecuted Christians."[3] Like Krentz, I am persuaded that 2 Thessalonians was written by someone in the Pauline orbit, after the death of Paul, to address a later situation in that church which was marked by persecution and apocalyptic misunderstandings. That author did not write *de novo*, however, but used 1 Thessalonians as the pattern letter from which he or she fashioned a new "Pauline" response to an urgent problem: a rumor (spread by a spirit, a word, or a letter purported to have been written by Paul), that the day of the Lord has come (2 Thess 2:2). This conclusion about the literary relationship of the two documents is well supported by the remarkable parallels in structure (even where the epistolary structure of 1 Thessalonians is irregular), content, and expression between the two.[4] If we accept this conclusion, then 2 Thessalonians must be read as a deliberate revision of its precursor apocalyptic text, 1 Thessalonians.

Paul had written 1 Thessalonians in the early 50s to respond to Christian grief over those who had died (whether from persecution or natural causes is not clear), an occurrence which appeared to disconfirm the kerygma which Paul had preached to them: that Christ was coming from heaven to rescue them from the coming wrath (1:10). Paul's strategy of response in his letter was to provide a fuller, expanded version of his apocalyptic scenario, in this case accounting for the fate of the Christian dead, who would by no means be excluded from union with the Lord, but in fact would have preeminence (4:15-16). Paul's vivid depiction of Christ's return and the union of Christians with him in the air, along with his assurance of their positive eschatological destiny because they are "children of the day," is intended to serve as ongoing consolation for the believers: "comfort one another with these words" (4:18; cf. 5:11).

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[3] Krentz, "Thessalonians," *ABD* 5.522.

[4] The classic study was that by W. Wrede, *Die Echtheit des Zweiten Thessalonicherbriefs* (TU 24/2; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1903), especially 3-36. In English see Ernst Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 50-51 (who does not take these as signs of non-Pauline origin), and Krentz, "Thessalonians," *ABD* 6.517-21, with a summary comment on p. 519: "Any historical reconstruction of the origin of the two letters must account for the linguistic and structural similarity of the two letters if written in a brief time span, while also recognizing the differences in historical situation, in eschatological outlook, and in their christology and soteriology."



In contrast, the author of 2 Thessalonians expends imaginative energy less on apocalyptic assurances than on a strikingly rich portrayal of the fate of the wicked at the parousia. That author's apocalyptic retelling gives little attention to the contemplation of eschatological union of the believer with Christ (termed simply "rest" [1:7]). The scene begins like 1 Thess 4:16 with the mention of the parousiac Christ coming with the angels. But it turns into Christ's dramatic encounter, not with believers (whose role is not to be united with their Lord so much as to be glorying and admiring witnesses of the vengeance on their enemies which, because of their faithfulness, they are spared [1:10]), but with those against whom the Christ will bring a terrible vengeance for disobedience and their current persecution of his followers. With a fiery flame Christ will exact vengeance, and they will have to pay the debt of "eternal destruction" for their misdeeds and misdirection. That the believers will be the recipients of a divine benefaction in being spared that fate the author is at pains to point out: "since it is just for God to repay the ones who are afflicting you with affliction, and to repay you with rest" (1:6-7). This apocalyptic scenario provides comfort not so much through a creative representation of the bliss which awaits the faithful as it does through a triumphant imaginative recasting of the other half of the drama: the destruction of the unjust by the parousiac Christ.

The specific occasion of this letter, as we noted, is a rumor that "the day of the Lord has (already) come" (2:2). This mistaken impression appears to have been due to a calculation based upon then-current events, which included a serious incident with a certain nefarious protagonist. The author who updates Paul's apocalyptic scenario to account for these later events proceeds from the apocalyptic commonplace that all these things are no surprise, but have been part of the plan from the beginning: first comes the "apostasy" and then the advent of Christ. Indeed the pseudepigraphy allows the author to point out that "Paul" had predicted all this long before (2:5). But our author fashions this expected response via an ingenious methodology with respect to the precursor text: by retaining its structure and language for heavenly epiphanies, and with it composing a narrative with an embedded diptych of the respective apocalypses of the Christ and "the man of lawlessness." In this way the apocalyptic logic and structure are retained, and all is demonstrated to be proceeding according to plan, but the adversary's advent is written as a parody of the "real" parousia of Christ, as yet in the future. But also here the Lord Jesus appears as parousiac judge and avenger, who "will destroy the lawless one by the breath of his mouth." This apocalypse sketches a combat of dueling parousias, one divine and one satanic, with the Lord Jesus annihilating his pale adversary, the lawless one (who is destroyed by breath alone!), and exacting judgment also against "all those who have not believed in the truth" (2:12).

The contrasting positive fate of believers is not really depicted, but neither is it really in doubt. The apocalyptic scenario is followed immediately by an outpouring of thanksgiving that they have been chosen by God as the "first fruits" for this salvation which has not been described, but which at least means being spared the utter destruction promised for the wicked (2:13f.). The Thessalonians, therefore, are not in danger of being on the wrong side in the end-time judgment, for their fate is not to be decided by their particular deeds. All they have to do is to stay firmly planted in the traditions which they have received (2:15), that is, the Pauline gospel which has been the agent of their sure attainment of positive eschatological judgment (2:14). The chief virtue in this apocalyptic scenario is "obedience" (3:14; contrast 1:8). The embattled church community has already received "an eternal consolation" (2:16) from God in the promise to destroy its enemies; indeed they are "an example of God's just judgment" (1:5), as together they await the consummation of their promised, communal salvation.

Matthew 24-25, a revision of Mark 13

It is well known that a major redactional theme of Matthew's Gospel is the end-time judgment of the wicked.[5] Matthew introduces this topic in various places into the Markan narrative which is his major source, both in his own compositions and as found in the Q-material, his other independent source.[6] But the most conspicuous place where the theme emerges with prominence is in his redaction of Mark's chap. 13, which shall be our focus here.[7] Although there are some subtle and important Matthean alterations to the early part of this apocalyptic speech by Jesus on the Mount of Olives, most noticeable is how Matthew has expanded and lengthened its ending to emphasize both the delay of the parousia and the punishment which awaits the wicked.[8] Mark's apocalyptic discourse, put in written form in his Gospel somewhere around the events of the Roman war on Judea in 66-70 C.E., assured his audience that their current persecutions amidst world-wide upheaval were all a part of the plan. Mark's apocalypse stressed the immediacy and imminence of the events Jesus foretells, along with a caution about being fooled by false messiahs and false prophets (13:21-22). Matthew retains much of Mark's account of

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[5] See, e.g., Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (trans. Wilhelm C. Linss; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 74-75; Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 191: "For Matthew's Jesus is first of all the eschatological judge.... Warning his hearers of the judgment that precedes the Kingdom of Heaven (13:24-50) and of the eternal punishment that awaits the damned (25:31-46), Matthew's Jesus lays down his own commandments. He will return to condemn those who had failed to do them, be they Jews, Gentiles, or (non-Matthean) Christians."

[6] For Matthew's use of his sources generally see Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 320-31.

[7] See Koester's table of sources drawn upon in Matthew 24-25 (*Ancient Christian Gospels*, 325-26).

[8] John P. Meier, "Matthew, Gospel of," ABD 4.635: "The Markan half of the discourse ends with the parable of the fig tree, emphasizing that the end is certain and near, yet sudden and incalculable. The tone of imminence comes from the Markan material; Matthew now balances that with his emphasis on delay. The second, a paraenetic half of the discourse (24:37–25:4) is more "Matthean" in that it comes to grips with the delay of the Parousia and the problem of flagging vigilance."

the speech, including its eschatological urgency (Mark 13:30-31//Matt 24:34-35), although the full form of his revised composition will temper it considerably.

Matthew begins to revise Mark's account substantially near the end of Mark's account of Jesus' speech. First, he has made an interesting change in his description of the parousia by providing an external subject for Mark's "they" who shall see the son of man, rendering it "all the tribes of the earth shall beat themselves in mourning and see the son of man" (Matt 24:30; an echo of Zech 12:10; cf. Rev 1:7), thereby emphasizing not simply the triumphant return of Christ, but also the fate of unbelievers who in the end will witness the consummation of their unrealized salvation. Then Matthew retains from Mark the statement about the vindication of the elect ("then he will send his angels and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven"), but now it stands in a more complex context of *dual* fates at the parousia. The contrast between "the tribes of the earth" and "his elect" was not made in the Markan narrative, which spoke only of the angelic in-gathering of the elect from the four winds. The fate of those not gathered up remained unexamined in the Markan narrative, but it is a preoccupation of Matthew's.

Where the fate of the wicked comes to the fore in Matthew's apocalypse is especially in what he does with the conclusion to this speech. Clearly Matthew thought that Mark's apocalyptic discourse, though worthy of replication, had left out matters of grave importance. Therefore he almost triples it in length by adding sayings and parables which focus on proper eschatological readiness and raise the threatening specter of being left out of the promised salvation. After retaining intact Mark's fig tree example (24:32-33), and the sayings about what passes away and what does not (24:34-35) and the day or the hour (24:36), Matthew adds six large units of tradition which all accent the punishment of the wicked: the days of Noah example (23:37-40), the saying about the householder's return (24:42-44) followed by the parable of the two servants, one faithful and one wicked (24:45-51), the parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13), the parable of the talents (25:14-30), and his signature piece, the depiction of the last judgment (25:31-46). The picture of eternal damnation for the wicked is the focus of all of this material, as it comes more sharply, and ominously, into view with each passage. As he had done with the four earlier discourses in the Gospel (the Sermon on the Mount, the Mission and Community Discourses, and the Parables Speech), Matthew rounds off his newly constructed speech with a final concluding formula ("And when Jesus finished all these words ...") before returning to the narrative which will subsequently tell of Jesus' last supper, trials and crucifixion in Jerusalem.[9] We shall look at each of Matthew's additions to the apocalyptic discourse in turn.

The Days of Noah. Here Matthew incorporates a Q passage that illustrates the need for proper preparation in the face of the coming parousia.[10] The counterexample is Noah's contemporaries, who carried on with business as usual while their fates were being sealed. The numbers aren't very promising, either, since only Noah and his family were saved while "the cataclysm came and killed *them all*." The culmination of the passage presents a terrible, highly

[9] Scholars universally recognize these as redactional (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

[10] John S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels: Synopsis, Critical Notes and Concordance* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1988), 190-95.

graphic description of dual judgment in the opposite fates of the two side by side in the field and at the millstone. Although we are not told why one was taken and the other not, the message is clear: the parousia will not snatch up everyone, but will initiate a selective gathering, capable of the most intricate weeding out of the virtuous from among the wicked. The power of the passage is its simplicity: one will be taken, one left. The starkness of these two as yet undescribed fates increases the stakes and highlights the *individual* judgment which awaits.

The Householder—A Saying and a Parable. Matthew spells out in more detail why one must stay awake and ready, like a homeowner who seeks to protect his home from a marauding thief. This provides a nice segue into the Q parable of the two servants. A bit more specificity about the two sides is given: the approved slave is "faithful" and "prudent," and fulfills all instructions, whereas the counterpart is "wicked" and, taking solace in the master's delay (24:48), beats up on his fellow-slaves and, like Noah's contemporaries, eats and drinks (with the drunkards). For these crimes, when the master comes his punishment will be astonishingly severe: the master will vivisect him! Matthew's message is undeniably directed to members of the church to shape up in their behavior now, before it is too late, and not to respond to the delay of the parousia with indolence. Perhaps the passage also offered some comfort to fellow Christians who were under the tyranny or abuse of another, and could find solace in their promised avenging.

The Ten Virgins. "Prudence" is exemplified once more by the five virgins who had the forethought to bring sufficient oil, as contrasted with their "foolish" compatriots. Again it is the delay of the master which occasions the problem (25:5). Interestingly, all ten fall asleep (thus breaking the fundamental eschatological command to wakefulness), but the moral becomes that one cannot rely on the readiness of others to carry one through. Only those who are ready will enter the feast; for the rest, disowning and banishment will be their fate. Again Matthew has added an emphasis on individual salvation (whereas Mark's apocalypse did not, but envisioned a corporate ingathering of elect, while issuing commands in the plural to the community to "stay awake") which is dependent upon one's own actions.

Clearly Matthew thought that Mark's apocalyptic discourse, though worthy of replication, had left out matters of grave importance. Therefore he almost triples it in length...

The Parable of the Talents. Matthew's version of this parable seems an expansion of Mark 13:34, but as it is also paralleled in Luke 19:11-27, probably is drawn largely from Q.[11] But even if this pericope comes from Q, Matthew's placement of it here fashions an expansion and development of

[11] There are some major differences in the Lucan version, however. For discussion and sources see Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels*, 196-201.

Whereas Mark had Jesus darkly warn his disciples to stay awake, Matthew's additions spell out in no uncertain terms the consequences of not doing so.

the hint of discrete individual responsibilities found in the Markan passage before him at this point. The servants' fate is not to be judged all as one, but separately. The one who did not invest his master's talent is deemed neither "good" nor "faithful," but "wicked," "unready" and "useless." His fate will be the same as the foolish virgins and the man torn in two: outside ("in the outer darkness") where "there is wailing and gnashing of teeth" (25:30; cf. 25:10-12; 24:51). Although the precise contours of such "investment" in Christian living remains (as many interpreters have bemoaned) frustratingly opaque in the parable itself, the message is not obscure: one's participation in the apocalyptic rewards continually depends upon one's actions.

The Sheep and the Goats. This passage, found only in Matthew's Gospel, is his signature piece, forming a fitting crescendo to his entire version of Jesus' apocalyptic discourse. Returning to the promise in his source, Mark 13:27, that the Son of Man will send his angels to gather his elect, Matthew revises that apocalyptic scenario to incorporate and play out the dualism which is his major preoccupation. Not only the elect are gathered up by the angels, but "all the nations" are gathered before the Son of Man, who divides them into two groups with separate fates. Allegory and parable retreat now, and the figure of the forensic Son of Man comes out from behind any other masks or personae into a scene of verisimilitude.[12] He alone decides the fate of each, and he will do so, not on the basis of election, but on the basis of ethical behavior toward the outcast. Instead of a scenario in which only the "elect" will be gathered up, all the nations will be gathered up, with the point of separation falling only later, before the throne, from which only two possible destinies issue: "going away" into eternal damnation, or "going away" into eternal life" (25:46).

There is no doubt where the emphasis of Matthew's apocalyptic discourse lies: on dual eschatological fates at the coming of the Son of Man which are dependent, not on prior election, nor on just staying awake, but on particular moral behaviors. Within that theoretical framework we notice that far more attention and detail are given to exact and precise depictions of punishments, whereas, on the contrary, eschatological bliss is hardly embellished at all. The one in the field or at the millstone is simply taken up, disappearing from view into an undisclosed place. The wise virgins gain admittance to a wedding banquet off screen, undescribed. The industrious servants go "into the joy of their master." More detailed, but still without amplification is "the kingdom prepared before the foundation of the world" which is the lot of those who served the Son of Man in others. In contrast the eternal damnation is painted in vivid

[12] Except in 24:34, 40, where he is called "the king" (but contrast 25:31!), likely a remnant of an earlier parabolic source.

strokes: to be cut in two, left standing by the locked door, stripped of all funds and thrown into the outer darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth, or to be cast into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. The effect of Matthew's redaction of Mark's apocalypse is to draw his readers' attention relentlessly to the expected punishment of the wicked. They can perhaps by that gain some solace, but not much in the long run, given that the stern warnings about impending judgment could apply to them also, if they are not careful. Whereas Mark had Jesus darkly warn his disciples to stay awake, Matthew's additions spell out in no uncertain terms the consequences of not doing so. This apocalypse affects the readers less by assuring them of their future, sure vindication in God's good time (as in Mark), than by placing the reader in a context of a morally just universe governed by a sure, fair, and severe divine judge, and by mustering them to a renewed commitment to the ethical guidelines which are the only guarantee of their eschatological salvation.

Second generation apocalyptic

I have sought to draw attention, by this redaction-critical comparison, to an arresting similarity between two roughly contemporaneous early Christian apocalyptic texts, Matthew and 2 Thessalonians: each revises an existing apocalypse to make it more vividly depict the torments of judgment which await the wicked. These two texts share this revisionist tendency, though the different identities of the antagonists in each case demonstrate the ready accommodation of a vindictive scenario to varied social functions in a range of historical contexts and conflicts, both internal (Matthew) and external (2 Thessalonians). The most significant difference between the two is the role of ethics in determining eschatological salvation: in 2 Thessalonians salvation depends upon fidelity to tradition and obedience, not a particular moral code,[13] whereas in Matthew's revision of Mark, individual ethical behavior is of paramount importance for determining one's fate at the last judgment.

It is an interesting thing in itself that apocalypses need to be revised, to be updated to account for subsequent events.[14] Is a revision, in the direction of emphasizing punishment on the day of the Lord, a natural movement of the apocalyptic form, a ubiquitous turn of the human religious psyche, or a common group response to some shared environmental factor, like persecution? I think all three possibilities name a contributing factor, but none of them is a sufficient or necessary condition for such a transformation, for apocalyptic literature does not appear to follow any exclusive rules of transmission and transformation.[15] We also

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[13] Though the tradition may include some elements of that, such as the need to work in order to eat (a dictum anchored in the apostolic word and example [2 Thess 3:7-10]), the important point is that these few community rules in 2 Thessalonians 3 are not presented as *requirements* for salvation.

[14] When the text becomes fixed, the interpretive enterprise shifts to commentary, which may be carried out in a range of media—exegesis, theology, or varied cultural expressions (see the essays in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992], and McGinn's comment on p. 6: "interpretation becomes new creation").

[15] A comparison of this trend with a wider database of apocalyptic literature would take us far afield of this limited study. But surely other patterns do exist, such as Daniel 12, one of the first apocalyptic texts, which already has a balance of positive and negative apocalyptic fates, and Revelation, which, although not apparently based upon a single

here must reckon with the real possibility that the "new edition" in each case was not intended to replace the original, which was destroyed, but rather to stand beside it. In that case, perhaps these texts, because they could presuppose the precursor apocalypse, naturally turned their emphases in ways which, their authors thought, complemented the original and updated it for their own community's particular needs. And in the case of 2 Thessalonians those perceived needs were defined by outside persecutors of the church, whereas in Matthew's community it was the problem of complacency and ethical sloth in the face of a delayed parousia.

Apocalypses at an apocalyptic moment

What does this mean for churches at the end of this century, when apocalyptic fervors of quite varied stripes and shapes are already emerging into our public and ecclesiastical discourse? First, it is always important for Christian practical theologians in ministry to reflect on the logic of apocalyptic, especially in the current climate in which the gospel is, in many places at least, defined especially with reference to inclusivity. This means that the apocalyptic dualism which we have been looking at in 2 Thessalonians and Matthew is going to "rub the wrong way" with other theological norms and needs, for their brand of apocalyptic is anything but "inclusive." So the first step is to explore the competing logics within the tradition so that the tension between values and sources is not left unnoticed, unexamined, or intentionally neglected, as is so often the case. But, secondly, in 2 Thessalonians and Matthew we see two different forms of apocalyptic dualism, with 2 Thessalonians based more on election and Matthew's on ethical attainment. And these two theological constructs have a long history of combat (which is hardly necessary to note in a Lutheran journal!) which has never been resolved. What might be gained by a new look this ancient and perduring theological conundrum in the current context?

Well, initially one could hope that the climate of inclusivity and ecumenicity in and among many churches (local, national and global) could provide a context in which we might look carefully and faithfully at the theology and politics of demonization of non-believers and other believers which are such a characteristic of biblical literature (as well as of many of our contemporary Christian believers—and not just Branch Davidians), and nowhere more starkly expressed or conveniently packaged than in apocalyptic texts. Only by facing up to those dramatic and dissenting elements in the tradition can the more recent "inclusive" gospel of the liberal churches (which can itself claim biblical roots of another sort) have a hope of success. In other words, churches have a responsibility to engage the fullness of the biblical tradition, and not just the parts it finds immediately congenial to its present ruminations—not necessarily for immediate or wholesale incorporation, but at the very least for a deepened and complexified reflection on current preoccupations.

Secondly, Christian preaching and teaching at this moment could usefully come to grips with two pedagogical facts: (1) as Matthew and 2 Thessalonians demonstrate, Christians have often found it both easier and more useful to construct powerful images of punishment and damnation than they have of salvation (one has only to look at medieval art—and much of the history of Western literature!—to substantiate this); and (2) if many current mainline Christians have lost this focus on damnation or hell or

eternal woes, then one of the major sources of religious imagery and the vitality that comes with it is entirely lost to them (what has become of religious art?). Therefore it becomes the task of contemporary Christian preachers, liturgists, teachers and social ministers to restore the positive side of the balance in powerful preaching of word and deed which is able to paint vivid mental pictures of a heaven worth finding, and a salvation worth attaining, which get their potency and energy not from a vindictive spirit, but from a commitment to divine values and virtues which have a real life and reality to them. Without images so powerful you could taste them, the Christian message and worldview can have no captive audience, no workforce on the ground. But the challenge is to do this, not the way the authors of Matthew and 2 Thessalonians did it, for the negative side, but for the positive side. That would seem to me to be the task for Christian preachers at the end of this millennium: to withstand the pressures to use apocalyptic to beat down opponents (inside and outside of the church), and instead to rechannel those energies into a vision of final salvation, of final judgment, which is true to the gospel and can compete with the other forms of salvation which the worlds of advertising, sports and medicine currently offer. And this needs to be carried out in a way that takes into account the cultural contexts within which this imaginative work needs to be done. I think we have stayed away from that task because we have also lost the older cosmological certainties, and are terribly afraid of awkward and jejeune literalisms. But the answer to that is not to abandon the task of envisioning salvation, but instead to work harder at furnishing that empty spiritual space in ways that do not insult congregations' intelligence, but also do not disregard the buoyancy of their imaginations.

What is the eternal life which the sheep will inherit? Tell me, preacher!

When I was a child my vision of heaven was simple and evocative: riding on my tricycle while clutching a 5 scoop (all different flavors) ice cream cone in one hand. This obviously meant a lot to me since I still remember it so vividly (though I never really dealt with the problem of how to drive with only one hand), but if I had to rely strictly on the Christian preaching I have encountered to construct an adult version of a heavenly vision—both for the church and for me individually—I am not sure I would have sufficient resources. But, according to John Chrysostom (c. 349-407 C.E.), one of the finest preachers in Christian history, what preaching is about is "painting portraits." So, what is behind that door that the five prepared virgins were allowed into? Where did the woman at the millstone go? What is the eternal life which the sheep will inherit? Tell me, preacher!

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precursor apocalypse (though this is a matter of debate), represents rather powerfully the vindictive imagination at work (in agreement with Adela Yarbro Collins, in conversation, September, 1997).

[16] "We are employed in painting portraits, royal portraits, none of any private person, employing the colors of virtue.... And our stylus, moreover, is the tongue, and the artist is the Holy Spirit" (*hom. in Ac.* 30.4 [60.227-28]).

Theological Faculty Statements in the Lutheran Magisterium: An Initial American Appraisal

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Statements on significant issues by theological faculties have often been a part of the "teaching office" or magisterium for Lutherans. The picture in North America has been quite varied, down to the most recent instance in the United States, seminary responses on 1997 Ecumenical Proposals before the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Churchwide Assembly. There is considerable agreement that theologians need to be significantly involved. But how? In an area where little has been researched and written up, as far as I have been able to discover, this is an initial attempt to put data[1] on the table, together with some observations.

Edgar Krentz, whom this essay honors, has been a teaching theologian in many senses of the term, in several Lutheran faculties, over his long career. He has written much in New Testament studies and served more widely in the programs of the Lutheran World Federation. Our careers have linked particularly when he served as a sort of court-appointed attorney to defend my use of "the historical-critical method," concerning justification and Christology (and behind it the roles of women in the New

[1] A letter in September to the president of every Lutheran seminary in the USA and Canada, including the Wisconsin Synod, asked for information, specifically about recent statements and past practices. I gratefully acknowledge responses from Concordia, St. Louis (John F. Johnson, August R. Suelflow); Concordia, Ft. Wayne (Dean O. Wenthe, David Scaer); Southern (H. Frederick Reisz, Jr.); Philadelphia (Robert Hughes); Trinity (Donald Huber); LSTC (William Lesher, Ralph W. Klein, Philip Hefner); Luther (David Tiede); Wartburg (Roger W. Fjeld); Saskatoon (Erwin Buck).

Testament and the ordination-of-women debate) in the program of the Division of Theological Studies of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.[2] I am happy to join in saluting a colleague, friend, and churchman, who also must have pondered how theological faculties fit into the life of the church.

European background

At the outset it can be acknowledged that "there is no *Lehramt*" or teaching office "in the Roman Catholic sense in the Evangelical realm, since according to Luther's 'primium principium' (WA 7:97-98) no earthly authority decides over the gospel."[3] This might seem especially obvious after the way the university faculties in Cologne and Louvain condemned the teaching of Luther, as did the papal bull *Exsurge Domine* in 1520. For the Reformers, as Eric Gritsch has put it, "the teaching office (*magisterium*) is essentially a preaching office (*Predigtamt*)," under and for the word of God.[4] But, Gritsch went on, in time "Luther's preaching office was transformed into a dogmatic teaching office," and "the teaching office, particularly in its function of judging doctrine and of exercising the power of the keys to forgive and to retain sin, was separated from local congregations, that is, from the common priesthood of all believers," and Lutheran universities like Jena and Wittenberg played a role in matters of doctrine and morals.[5] We may add that the history and place of "the Lutheran teaching office deserves careful consideration in the systematic reflections of Lutheran theologians."[6] Recent European examples of faculty statements that come to mind include those on Rudolf Bultmann's *Entmythologisierung* proposal in the early '50s (Tübingen, Bethel-Bielefeld) and more recently from Lutheran members of the Göttingen faculty on Roman Catholic rapproachement.[7]

North American experiences

Whatever the experiences in Europe, Lutheran settlers in the United States and Canada were at first too poor, ill-organized, and too concerned with starting congregations where the word might have its course, to be caught up in development of a magisterium. Scripture and Confessions served to guide, amid the new pluralism of a free society. But seminaries were founded, sooner or later, by each immigrant group, to educate pastors and provide leadership. Church periodicals helped, and synods addressed emerging issues. How the many Lutheran bodies in America organized and met such needs is a matter of church history. How theological faculties played a role varied. Of the three major Lutheran groups in the middle and second half of the twentieth century, each has had a different history.

a. In the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, questions were often taken up at

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[2] E. Krentz, "Historical Criticism and Confessional Commitment," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 15 (1988) 128-36.

[3] K. G. Steck, "Lehramt," *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, third ed., 4 (1960) 268-69. The Luther reference is to the word, in connection with the condemnations in the bull of Leo X.

[4] E. W. Gritsch, "Lutheran Teaching Authority: Past and Present," in *Teaching Authority & Infallibility in the Church*, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI, ed. Paul C. Empie, T. Austin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 140.

[5] *Ibid.*, 142.

[6] *Ibid.*, 143.

[7] The latter is translated as "An Opinion on The Condemnations of the Reformation Era, Part One: Justification," *Lutheran Quarterly* 5 (1991) 1-62.

pastoral conferences and then sometimes referred to the seminary faculty for an opinion or judgment (*Gutachten*), August R. Suelflow writes.[8] In "the [C. W. F.] Walther era," 1847-1886, "a number of such opinions were produced, concerning such subjects as the authority of a pastor, divorce and remarriage, membership in secret societies, marriage to an unbeliever, permitting separated couples to receive Holy Communion, marriage of a widower to his wife's sister, the second marriage of a husband whose wife refused to accompany him to America, issues relating to the 'lesser ban,' implications for permission to receive Holy Communion after a person had been married in a non-Lutheran church, and many others." Walther sometimes personally responded to queries "without the formality of a *Gutachten*." In the faculty the pattern was often to refer the matter "to a faculty member who would be most competent to do research on the issue and prepare a draft ... reviewed by the faculty before it was sent out to the pastor of the congregation who had raised the issue."

There is agreement that "the call for such opinions decreased" as synodical publications were produced and above all when the Commission on Theology and Church Relations was established in 1962. Requests by the Synod for a study and/or statement or by a congregation for an "opinion" were normally met by CTCR staff, sometimes with the help of a larger study group.[9] There is some evidence that in recent years seminary faculties have again been regarded as appropriately providing *Gutachten*. At times a request has been assigned to the Systematics Department to answer. One of the last opinions recalled at Concordia, St. Louis, was in 1949, that engagement is not necessarily tantamount to marriage and therefore breaking an engagement is not tantamount to divorce.

It is possible to be more specific about "expert opinions" from Concordia, Springfield/Ft. Wayne.[10] One in 1961 concerned the call of teachers. Did "enforced retirement" limit tenure and so violate calls in the Lutheran School Association? The answer was in the negative, "no conflict."[11] Two others dealt with Scripture, on Paul G. Bretscher's *The Sword of the Spirit*, that "Word of God" refers to Christ, not to the Bible, and that unequivocally to call the Bible "Word of God" is a "Satanic 'pseudo-theology'"; and on the question of a Lutheran pastor in Germany about rejecting books in the canon which do not have apostolic authority.[12] The most recent example from the Department of Systematic Theology declares the "Meta-Church" defective.[13] One in 1993 assessed the Lutheran-Reformed volume, *A Common Calling*.[14] There was a statement by the two LC–MS faculties in 1997 on the Porvoo Agreement, and something is planned on ELCA actions on proposals with Roman Catholics and three Reformed-Presbyterian churches.

To summarize: seminary *Gutachten* (most of them uncollected and not trans-

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[8] Memorandum 9/29/97.

[9] One should not lose sight of earlier statements from the CTCR such as "A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies," 1967.

[10] E-mail from David Scaer 11/1/97, research by a departmental graduate assistant.

[11] The *Springfielder*, 25.2 (Summer 1961) 55-56.

[12] *CTQ* 43.4 (Oct. 1979) 327-37; Bretscher's views were presented at the 1978 Assembly of Evangelical Lutherans in Mission. *CTQ* 44.1 (Jan. 1980) 46-49.

[13] *CTQ* 59.3 (July 1995) 219-24; "meta-church" as in C. F. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1991) and the "church growth" movement.

[14] *CTQ* 57.3 (July 1993) 191-213, at the request of LC–MS President Alvin Barry.

lated) were common in the LC–MS, especially from systematicians. But the CTCR provided a fuller, synod-wide way of issuing studies and statements.

b. The heritage in the American Lutheran Church varies somewhat, depending on which seminary in which church body. For Capital (now Trinity) Seminary there had been the custom of calling on the faculty with regard to various issues in the Joint Synod of Ohio and the ALC.[15] After 1960, in TALC, people at Wartburg and Capital felt less called upon. I certainly heard over the years the suspicion that there was (too) much "informal consultation" between church officials in Minneapolis and some faculty members at Luther in St. Paul. (The same sort of charge could emerge with regard to publishing houses in the Twin Cities or Philadelphia.) Is geography a factor? But how much "informal consultation" is too much? Can "geographical convenience" lead to at least some theological input?

There was no CTCR in the ALC, but some people look back with a certain fondness to the "different relationship" that obtained when the president and a faculty member from each seminary were present as advisors to national conventions, and (with board chair) at every meeting of the Board of Theological Education and Ministry. Roger W. Fjeld describes it as a feeling of being "more central to the processes of the ALC," even if advice was "more informal."[16] A more formal example concerns the instance when ALC President Kent Knutsen asked all three faculties "whether they saw any reason why women should not be ordained"; Fjeld is "convinced that the seminary statements made a significant difference in the... final vote at San Antonio."[17] David Tiede has articulated well what others also suggest: in the past, "responses were particularly helpful and well

There is some evidence that in recent years seminary faculties have again been regarded as appropriately providing *Gutachten.*

received when they were requested early in the various processes so that faculties could be part of the deliberation rather than placed in the situation of reacting to a completed document."[18]

c. The Lutheran Church in America (LCA), with its larger number of seminaries, provides an even more varied picture. It is similar in that faculties were regional resources for answering disputed questions in synods, but separate investigation is needed on the Augustana Synod and other ethnic groups. I can recall, as a young faculty member, being involved at the Philadelphia Seminary, in the mid-1950s, in what was probably the last instance of a faculty opinion requested by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania. It was on "The Holy Communion and its Uses." In 1955 Synod President Charles Muhlenberg Cooper had called attention to certain problems in some congregations and with extra-congrega-

[15] E-mail from Donald Huber 10/31/97.

[16] Letter 10/1/97.

[17] Details in J. Reumann, *Ministries Examined* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), 132.

[18] Letter 10/15/97.

tional communions. He asked Ministerium members of the Philadelphia faculty to draft a report, which went through the synod's Executive Board to the synod meeting in Ministerial Session in 1956 as information and then for discussion and vote at the 1957 Convention. It was approved, in spite of charges of "heresy hunt" (Luther D. Reed, but divisions already existed, thanks to "young high churchmen") and a minority report and even a group seeking to "Save the Church from Calvinism." Some aspects may seem quaint today, but other issues then still remain. Philadelphia professors Theodore G. Tappert and Martin J. Heinecken (New York Synod) were part of the commission that prepared the not unrelated report approved at the 1960 United Lutheran Church convention on "The Sacrament of the Altar and its Implications."[19]

The LCA had no CTCR but was active in providing Social Statements under its Board of Social Ministry and later its Division for Mission in North America, Department of Church and Society.[20] An able staff involved various seminary faculty and others in the study process, and sophisticated efforts were made to test reactions in congregations and elsewhere. LCA faculty members and other professors at non-LCA institutions like George Forrell, Krister Stendahl, and George Lindbeck could be elected as convention delegates, and often provided important voices theologically in floor debate or behind the scenes.

d. Lutherans in Canada were for a long time part of the ALC, LCA, or LC–MS. Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada,[21] task forces have usually included a faculty member from each of its two seminaries, a representative through whom the seminary's voice can be heard. On one occasion the two seminaries were asked to study issues connected with the diaconate. Their joint conclusions were published in the journal *Consensus*,[22] but there was some unhappiness with this, on the grounds that the final paper no longer belonged to the seminaries, the church having the prerogative to decide on disposition of the document.

Recent ELCA responses

Although, within the ELCA, responses on the 1997 Ecumenical Proposals most vividly come to mind, other and earlier examples exist of faculty statements. LSTC, e.g., spent a lot of time on the Study of Ministry and the World Mission statement (on which there were divided reactions).[23] Many respondents called attention to responses on the Sexuality Statement. Wartburg was positive on the first draft, concluding the second was less adequate;[24] Luther faculty members circulated several reactions to this statement; LSTC employed the journal *Currents* to present various views,

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[19] *Minutes of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States*, 210th Annual Convention, 1957, pp. 132-34. *Minutes of the Twenty-Second Biennial Convention of the United Lutheran Church in America*, 1960, 918-34, 941, 1065-69; and archival materials in my files.

[20] History and texts in *Politics and Policy: The Genesis and Theology of Social Statements in the Lutheran Church in America*, by Christa R. Klein with Christian D. von Dehsen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

[21] E-mail from E. Buck 10/31/98.

[22] "Response to Ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church: Its Forms and Practices," by the Faculties of Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, and Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Waterloo, *Consensus* 18.2 (1992) 79-90. The seminaries urged that the ELCIC *Ministry* document not be adopted "in its present form," especially with regard to a proposed "ordained office of deacon."

[23] E-mail from Philip Hefner 10/28/97.

[24] Fjeld, letter of 10/1/97.

e.g., on ministry.[25] Roger Fjeld speaks of "a frustrating experience" in trying to have one seminary cluster propose a response to an ELCA statement, on which other institutions would "sign off."[26] Thus, much effort, little clear and agreed pattern.

The responses of five ELCA seminaries to the Ecumenical Proposals in 1997, available to voting members of the Assembly and more widely in *Dialog*,[27] were generally positive. There was none from Pacific. Wartburg elected not to develop a formal response but conducted an on-campus event concerning all three, "to model the way we hope pastors will present such issues in parishes."[28] LSTC had a number of theological colloquies on the statements.[29] Probably no unanimous position would have emerged in either faculty. Luther Seminary spoke only on the Roman Catholic declaration, for postponing action. Only Southern (on March 14) and Trinity presented conclusions on all three proposals in a single statement. Some schools which responded and others which did not complained about the shortness of time to tackle the topic. Trinity reported most fully on abstentions and number or percent of faculty support on each proposal.[30] The word "unanimously" was used by Philadelphia in two of its three statements with regard to its views on *A Formula of Agreement* and the *Concordat*. The third stresses how "the faculty is of the opinion that..." with regard to the Joint Declaration.

The way such statements are reported in summary is not without problems. However nuanced statements might be, news releases or *The Lutheran* usually emphasized their (full) support for official proposals. My own interest in the topic of *Gutachten* was stimulated by the news release that

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[25] Details on the Luther Northwestern statements in my "Sex *et Alia* and Law/Gospel Preaching," *Dialog* 34 (Summer 1995):181. *Currents* 17:1 (Feb. 1990) dealt with ministry in order "to help people understand... the historical backgrounds, the issues, and the options in the ELCA's study of ministry." While not faculty statements, other print efforts to aid decision-making in the Commission for a New Lutheran Church and in the ministry study came in the volume, *The New Church Debate: Issues Facing American Lutheranism*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), from a conference at LSTC Feb. 8-11, 1983, on "The New Church and its Ministry: the Ecclesiological Challenge Facing American Lutheranism"; and in that from Luther Seminary faculty, *Called and Ordained: Lutheran Perspectives on the Office of Ministry*, ed. Todd Nichol and Marc Kolden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

[26] Letter 10/1/97.

[27] ELCA 1997 *Pre-Assembly Report*, Section V, pp. 9-27, just prior to the action of the Lutheran Youth Organization, July 26, 1997, p. 30.1; *Dialog* 36 (Summer 1997) 216-29 (version usually cited below). The *Pre-Assembly Report* includes on pp. 10-11 the "Counsel to the Church from the Conference of Seminary Presidents," not in *Dialog*, and separates responses on Full Communion (Reformed, Episcopal) from those on the "Doctrine of Justification" (Roman Catholic), which *Dialog* prints together (e.g., for Gettysburg, pp. 216-18, actions of Dec. 9 and May 12, but *Pre-Assembly Report* pp. 12-13 and 27). The opening three paragraphs in the response from Trinity, in *Pre-Assembly Report* p. 19, are omitted in *Dialog* 221. From Luther *Dialog* 224-29 prints only "A Call for Discussion of the 'Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,'" dated May 15, and *Pre-Assembly Report* 24 only the brief faculty statement of May 22. To Philadelphia's endorsement for Reformed and Episcopal proposals, dated Jan. 18, in both printed versions, must be added that of May 31, urging delay on the Joint Declaration (found only in *Pre-Assembly Report* 26).

[28] Fjeld letter 10/1/97.

[29] Klein, E-mail 10/28/97.

[30] *Dialog* 36:221.

The teaching office is broader than ELCA faculties. The ELCA's "highest authority" in this sense is the Churchwide Assembly.

the eight ELCA seminary presidents, meeting March 21-24, had counseled careful study, honoring the Confessions, and respecting disagreement—without endorsing any proposal.[31] (The news release added that Gettysburg and Philadelphia had unanimously endorsed the full communion proposals, and Southern the adoption of all three statements.) My understanding is that William Lesher, of LSTC, made the suggestion that seminaries be models of deliberation, describing not polemicizing, not champions of causes, among winners and losers. That counsel caused me to ask, "Why not?" but also, "How, then, theological involvement?"

As can be seen, there is need for a number of further studies and even (S.T.M.) dissertations on theology-faculty statements, including how and why the 1997 responses came about. I illustrate some of the issues by analyses of statements from Philadelphia, in part because only LTSP has provided three responses. I do so as a outside reader, without detailing the account from President Robert Hughes of initial feelings that the faculty had not let its voice be heard in the past, but that decision to draft something which everyone could "sign off on" emerged only slowly.[32]

The Philadelphia statement of January 18 spoke of how the Reformed and Episcopal proposals "may be received as expressing God's will and work..." for unity. There is far less on *A Formula of Agreement* than on the *Concordat*. In spite of questions about any "binding" effect in the United Church of Christ, the *Formula* was held up as something of a model for the *Concordat*, "more as a covenant and mutual agreement ... than as legal prescriptions." The fact that the Philadelphia faculty included one Lutheran member of the national dialogue team, a person who formerly taught at a UCC seminary, one Presbyterian and one UCC/Disciple could be interpreted in two ways: positively, who would better know the churches and issues involved firsthand? Cynically, "of course there'd be little criticism." The section on the Episcopal proposal is more puzzling. The emphasis in the *Concordat* on the episcopate and orders of ministry is regretted. Twice the "well-being" of the church is spoken of (*bene esse*, not *esse*?). The faculty stress is on "the centrality of the gospel and a mutual acceptance of one another's weaknesses.... In that spirit of acceptance the ELCA can acknowledge the historic necessity among Episcopal brothers and sisters to insist upon a particular understanding of the historic episcopate. We trust that the Episcopal Church will acknowledge the centrality of our church's confession to our own identity.... It is in this sense that we endorse the 'Concordat.'" But is that what the Concordat means as to the *esse* the historic episcopate provides for the church?

The May 31 Statement from LTSP on the "Joint Declaration" echoes that from six

[31] ELCA *Newsbriefs*, April 22, 1997, p. 3.
[32] Letter 11/19/97.

theologians at Luther, dated May 15, deploring lack of time and urging further discussion, but without any of the Luther group's specific concerns about contents.[33] Instead of postponing action (so Luther, May 22),[34] the Philadelphia faculty, as "teaching theologians of this church," preferred that action be delayed till 1999 (in the Assembly), with the ELCA Church Council, "in cooperation with the seminary faculties," meanwhile transmitting a response to the LWF for its 1998 deadline. (That would effectively bypass the Assembly for a lower-level response, and equates ELCA seminary faculties with a broader ELCA term, "teaching theologians.") An opinion on the mutual condemnations is promised "in the near future." A Statement of September 12, "Toward Fuller Unity" (locally distributed), deals mostly with the *Concordat*, suggesting commentary or revision that will provide "a stronger summary of the doctrines of the faith," with "the historic episcopate" as "desirable for increasing the unity of the churches... but not as a prerequisite for authentic ministry." That underestimates the commitment of the *Concordat* to the fourth point in the Anglican Quadrilateral, the historic episcopate, as a (the?) confessional *proprium*.

Did such statements help at the Churchwide Assembly? Many delegates, Timothy Lull reports, said they "were helpful," and "speeches drew on critical comments from seminary faculty members."[35] Evidence is chiefly anecdotal here, and close reading of faculty statements is needed, as I have begun to do for Philadelphia's. No doubt Ed Krentz, in the "leisures" of retirement, could add many more astute observations.

Conclusions

One must be wary of drawing conclusions for the future at this stage. I venture three, however. (1) There is a long and proper history of involvement by Lutheran theologians in the magisterium or teaching office. (2) There is desire and good will today to include theologians in the process, but the teaching office is broader than ELCA faculties. The ELCA's "highest authority" in this sense is the Churchwide Assembly. How to get more theological input there? (3) Is there a desire to have a Commission on Theology, if not in LC-MS style, at least like what LWF and the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. have had? Or the ALC practice of seminary representation, at least with voice, at key places? Or shall bishops appoint "canon theologians"? Or ought we have a quota group of theologians elected for Assemblies? Or must theologians take a part in all the levels of church processes? The needed discussion is only beginning!

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[33] *Dialog* 36:225-29.

[34] *Pre-Assembly Report* 24.

[35] "Losers and Winners in Philadelphia," *Dialog* 36:4 (Fall 1997) 245.

Book Reviews

Fortress Introduction to the Four Gospels. By Mark Allan Powell. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998. vii and 184 pages. Paper. $14.00.

Those whose responsibility it is to preach Sunday after Sunday, year after year, will find this introduction to the four Gospels a welcome resource. I can see myself consulting it at the beginning of each lectionary year to get straight in my own mind the particular themes and emphases of the Gospel to be read regularly throughout the year, so that in my preaching I will do justice to the particular text which will be the basis for my proclamation of God's good news. Because John's Gospel comes up at various times every year, I imagine I will be reviewing the material on John at the beginning of every year.

Mark Allan Powell, who teaches at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio, has given us a clear and readable introduction to the New Testament Gospels. An introductory chapter sketches the movement of the gospel message from Jesus through the oral and written witness to him to the preservation and translation of manuscripts and their reception by us. Separate chapters present the characteristics, historical context, and major themes of each of the four Gospels. At the end of each chapter there are bibliographical samples of major studies of each Gospel; included for each chapter are feminist readings. An appendix describes and summarizes the Gospels not included in the New Testament canon, such as the Gospel of Thomas.

A special feature of the work is the series of charts which summarize and illustrate the points being made in the chapter. For example, one chart lists seven principles at work in Matthew's use of the material from Mark; another details the differences between John and the synoptic Gospels; another lists all the material unique to Luke.

Powell regularly reviews the issues under discussion by New Testament scholars, for example, on the authorship of a particular gospel, or how to solve the synoptic problem. The variety of scholarly viewpoints was presented succinctly, clearly, and objectively, and I was allowed to make up my own mind on the issues.

Of special interest to me was Powell's treatment of the question, "What is a Gospel, anyway?" Powell's conclusion gives us a choice between writings like biographies extant at the time or writings that transcended those biographies. For me that does not yet account for what makes the Gospels unique as witnesses to the gospel incarnate in Jesus Christ. I want to keep asking his question.

John H. Tietjen
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The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor: Character Types in Luke-Acts. By S. John Roth. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 144. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997. 253 pages. Cloth. $62.00.

Roth employs reader response criticism, literary characterization, and intertextuality to advance the thesis that Luke's authorial audience would construe characters such as the blind, the lame, and the poor according to Septuagintal antecedents. Roth claims that the prominence of such in Luke and their scarcity in Acts highlight Jesus' messianic credentials (presuming rather than showing Jesus' divinity). This is a helpful corrective to derivations of these characters from Hebrew antecedents. Consequently, rather than pious, the poor are socially incapacitated, and so appeal to God.

After introducing issues, the book surveys scholarly interpretation of such characters and establishes its method. Roth posits the Septuagint as the intertext for construing these characters and summarizes the function of such types in the Septuagint. He then applies these types from

the Septuagint to their appearance in Luke and devotes a short chapter to their appearance in Acts.

I raise two issues. (1) The cultural repertoire on which the authorial audience draws is vast. Should it not include the social world as well as the Septuagint? (2) Are these characters indeed suppressed in Acts? True, Roth's somewhat arbitrary terms are not as prominent in Acts. But the book overemphasizes terms and neglects manifestations of God's beneficence to people in need, which remain conspicuous in Acts. The healing of a lame man takes more space in Acts than any healing of Jesus in Luke (Acts 3:1–4:22). One can hardly overlook the prayer for healing in 4:30, the widows in 6:1, the healing of Paul's blindness, the healing of paralytics by Philip and Peter, the exorcism in 16:18, a summary of healings in 19:11-12, and the healing of Publius (28:8). Further, the new community provides for those in need, so that such characters have an ecclesiastical function in Acts, though derivatively this too is christological and ultimately theocentric.

The book is especially valuable as an alternative to the notion that the poor represent a pious attitude. It will also be useful as a commentary on selected texts. But it would add to the book's significance if the poor were located not just in the Septuagint but in the social world of Luke-Acts.

Robert L. Brawley
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Pauline Theology. Volume III: Romans. Edited by David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. xii and 354 pages. Cloth. $35.00.

David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson have provided us a thirteen-course feast on the interpretation of Romans. Their volume is the literary outcome of the Pauline Theology Group of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Part I opens with one of the most hotly debated issues in the study of Romans: the purpose of the letter. Leander Keck quickly moves from appetizer to main course by warning that, while attention to the historical setting of Romans is important, over-attention to a particular historical reconstruction may cause the interpreter to rely too much on historical data that is scanty. In fact, "Romans ticks because Paul did not allow his immediate situation to govern completely what he had to say, but allowed the inner logic of his gospel to assert itself even if that meant subjecting his first readers to a certain amount of theological overkill" (p. 29). The next essay, by N. T. Wright, caused the reviewer some theological indigestion. Wright argues that God drew the sin of the whole world onto Israel, so that Israel in turn could pass it on to the Messiah, where it finally could be dealt with. Richard Hays, in his comparison of the initial two essays, has difficulty finding where Paul said that Israel was supposed to draw to itself the world's sin. Hays also points to the potentially disturbing conclusions that could result from such a thesis.

In Part II several essays provide a well-balanced, solid portion of the meal. Robert Jewett argues that Paul's theology has to be understood in light of his missional purpose. J. Paul Sampley responds that Jewett has overplayed the Spanish mission hand; interpreters need to focus more on Paul's ministry in Rome as well as his projected visit to Jerusalem. Andrew Lincoln writes a fine study of 1:18–4:25, with which Jouette Bassler largely agrees. William Campbell shows how 12:1–15:13 are a necessary component of the letter and not an afterthought. Mark Reasoner responds with a brief but perceptive exegetical study of the same chapters.

The thinnest soup of the feast is Frank Thielman's essay, "The Story of Israel and the Theology of Romans 5-8." Despite the fact that Paul does not mention Israel or Jew in these chapters and there are only two biblical quotations in them, Thielman tries to show how Israel's history is the key to interpreting 5-8. Charles Cousa's response is exegetically erudite. He not only questions the application of Israel's story to 5-8 and Thielman's pattern of that story, he also maintains that apocalyptic is the key to this section of Romans.

Perhaps the spiciest exchange is the one between Johnson and Douglas Moo. For Johnson the main concern of chapters 9-11 is the tension between God's impartiality and God's faithful-

ness to Israel. Moo agrees with her that the view that Israel is displaced by the church and the view of two covenants (one for Jews and one for Christians) are to be avoided, but he still feels that she underestimates the significance for Paul of Jewish unbelief. He also posits a large-scale conversion of Jews when Christ returns. The reader may well wish to hear Johnson's reaction to Moo's response.

Missing entrees include justification (although Lincoln has useful comments) and the debate over whether "faith of Jesus Christ" means faith in Jesus or the faith of Jesus (the latter is preferred in the essays). Still, there is much protein in this volume, and it is an excellent resource. Although best read essay-by-essay, the indices provide ready access to discussions on individual pericopes. Food for the morrow is provided in an extensive bibliography.

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The Epistle to the Romans. By Douglas Moo. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996. xxv and 1012 pages. Cloth. $50.00.

Moo's commentary is in The New International Commentary on the New Testament series (the material on chapters 1-8 is an updating of a commentary published in 1991 in another series). So many major commentaries on Romans have appeared in recent years that it seems helpful to compare Moo with some of the others.

This semester I am reading Moo while teaching a Romans course in which the students use the commentary by James Dunn (2 vols., Word, 1988). Three years earlier as my supplement to Dunn I used the outstanding commentary on Romans in the Anchor Bible series by Roman Catholic exegete Joseph Fitzmyer (Doubleday, 1993). I have found Moo very useful. While it is always clear what his own view is on a controverted issue, he always lists and dialogues with a wide range of alternative views (in this respect his commentary resembles Cranfield's comprehensive work [2 vols., ICC, new series, T and T Clark, 1975, 1979], which I had used in an earlier Romans course to supplement the students' reading of Ernst Käsemann's monumental commentary, with its strong Lutheran focus—Eerdmans, 1980). How comprehensive is Moo's interaction with other commentaries? In the index I counted 321 references to Käsemann, and there were many more than that to Dunn and Cranfield!

Reference to an excursus in Moo on "Paul, 'works of the law,' and first-century Judaism" (pp. 211-217) can illustrate the value of the book as a resource for various views and for Moo's own stance on the issue of why "no one will be justified by works of the law" (Rom 3:20). What, asks Moo, was Paul opposing here? The usual view (which some label the "Lutheran orthodox" interpretation) is that Paul was opposing Jews who believed they "could get into relationship with God by obedience to the law" (p. 212). The counterview (the "new perspective on Paul"), held by E. P. Sanders, Krister Stendahl and James Dunn, among others, is that Jews at that time generally did not believe they attained righteousness by good works (they lived in a covenantal relationship based on God's grace), and that "works of the law" were primarily the boundary issues (circumcision, food laws, sabbath observance) which some Jews saw as marks of their special status before God (this is especially Dunn's view). These scholars see boundary issues between Jews and Gentiles as a primary focus in Romans, in which Paul stresses that the God who is one offers equal access to all (that is, Jew and Greek). Moo challenges several of Dunn's conclusions on this issue and believes that "the traditional view remains the best explanation of the Pauline polemic" (p. 212)—a status I would confer on the "new perspective on Paul."

If you would buy one recent major commentary on Romans, should it be Moo's? It would be a fine choice. My own preference would be Dunn's, or perhaps Fitzmyer's (or, to introduce yet one more, a person interested in the important literary-rhetorical approach now receiving major stress might enjoy the fine new commentary by Brendan Byrne in the Sacra Pagina series [Liturgical Press, 1996]). What a blessed embarrassment of riches!

Everett Kalin
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

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Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians. By Ben Witherington III. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; Carlisle, England: The Paternoster Press, 1995. xx and 492 pages. Paper. $34.95.

In this commentary Witherington uses rhetorical criticism and social analysis, both methods that have recently come into favor, to interpret the Corinthian letters. Both methods have great promise; combined they should aid greatly. Witherington in general uses them well, but errs too often in matters of detail.

First the positive comments. Witherington locates the Corinthian Christians squarely within the social fabric of Corinth. His social analysis is actually social description—without use of sociological models. He regards the problems Paul faces in 1 Corinthians as largely social in nature, internal to the Christian community, the result of divisions. He downplays any theological origin of the major problems—except perhaps for the disagreements over eschatology.

He combines this social description with the rhetorical analysis of the letters, arguing that Paul is clearly influenced by Greek rhetoric. In 1 Corinthians Paul uses deliberative rhetoric that stresses concord or reconciliation (leaning on Margaret Mitchell); 2 Corinthians is a form of dikastic or judicial rhetoric. Witherington analyzes each letter in terms of oratorical structure, but makes minimal analysis of rhetorical ornament or Aristotelian means of proof. Thus his use of Greek rhetoric is only partial.

In sum this commentary is interesting, informative, and stimulating. But one must use it with some cautions. At many points there are errors of fact or interpretation. Let me cite only a few, the first archaeological. Pages 6-7 reproduce N. Paphatzi's reconstruction of ancient Corinth. Witherington mis-identifies it as a "reconstruction of the forum of Roman Corinth." But it shows much more of the central city than that. The illustration needs a plan of the central city correlated with the reconstruction that identifies the significance of each structure shown. Rather than picture the only shop with a vaulted roof from the north shops of the forum, shops from the western side would have been much more typical in size and construction. Page 17 identifies one of the caryatids from the inner propylaeon at Eleusis as a statue of Kore; in reference to Eleusis that should mean a statue of Persephone, which it certainly is not! (He uses the false term "Eleusian" for "Eleusinian" on the same page.) On p. 25 the caption to a plate describes it as a "Menorah lintel and synagogue inscription." The menorah piece is not a lintel, but either a springer for an arch or the capital of an attached column. The crude Greek inscription may come from a lintel. On p. 31 he identifies military dress as "typical Roman attire—a tunic." The picture of the *bema* in the forum at Corinth gives no idea of what the *bema* really looks like; he would have done better to use a ground plan and elevation by the excavation architect to give an idea of how architecture clarifies function. On p. 194 he publishes an isometric reconstruction of a Roman house; he would have done better to give the plan, or reconstruction, of the Roman villa excavated in Anaploga in ancient Corinth. On p. 415 he pictures a Roman era column honoring a patron from Palestine (Beth Shean/Scythopolis); why not show the inscriptions from Corinth in which benefactors call attention to their own benefactions? The plate on p. 417 shows "a relief found at Corinth depicting a Roman official." He refers to the inscription on p. 415 n. 13 without giving its text or a specific reference to the proper publication.

He is not consistent in his use of names for Greek and/or Roman gods, using the Greek Asklepios on p. 15, the Greek Demeter and Kore, but the Roman Dionysius on p. 17. On p. 16 he seeks to tie the Corinthian understanding of prophecy and glossalalia to Apollo's relation to Delphi, when there was a temple to Apollo of Claros in the forum, a much closer tie.

I do like this commentary. Witherington gives extensive bibliographies to modern scholarship, on which he draws constantly. I wish he had given equally rich references to ancient archaeological, epigraphic, and literary texts in Greek—and especially that he had given even more attention to that record left at ancient Corinth. It would have made good book an outstanding one.

Edgar Krentz

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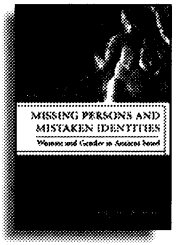
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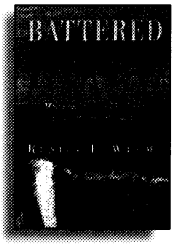
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Briefly Noted

David Rankin seeks to rehabilitate Tertullian in his **Tertullian and the Church** (Cambridge, $54.95). Tertullian held—and expressed—strong divergent opinions against Greek philosophy, the soul, and marriage. Add that he came under the influence of the New Prophecy and you understand why the standard view is that he was an unorthodox, even schismatic, Montanist who stood on the periphery of the church. Rankin argues that Tertullian was orthodox in his ecclesiology, a strong influence at a *kairos* in developing concepts of church and ministry. He discusses, *inter alia*, Tertullian's ecclesiological images, the marks of the church, and the structure of ministry (including women in ministry). He did not change his views greatly, even after he joined the New Prophecy movement. In short, he prepared the way of the episcopal structure of the later Western Church. A fascinating read, closely argued, well documented, with sympathy for a person often regarded with suspicion. *Edgar Krentz*

James D. G. Dunn's significant study, **Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament**, first appeared in 1975. Long out of print, but still useful, Eerdmans has made it available in an unaltered reprint ($30). If you missed the first edition, you will want to add this to your library; it also has implications for understanding the experience of the Spirit in the contemporary age. *Edgar Krentz*

In **The Letters of St. Anthony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint** (Fortress, $20) Samuel Rubenson first introduces the seven letters ascribed to this Egyptian desert monk by describing the versions that survive, reconstructing the historical background, and summarizing the "Gnosis" of the saint. Next, after reconstructing the social and ecclesiastical context of third and fourth century Egypt, he describes the picture of St. Anthony in the various surviving sources: the lives of the saint, the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, and references in other literature. He concludes that Anthony was the first Egyptian Christian to write in Coptic (not Greek), not an unlearned and crude monk as so often depicted, but a theologian acquainted with Greek philosophy and Origenist theology. The final section is a translation of the reconstructed text with philological notes. Rubenson includes an extensive bibliography and helpful indices. Given that there are more Coptic Christians than Lutherans in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, it is good to have this study of one of the proto-Coptic saints. Perhaps we can look forward to a similar study of St. Menas. *Edgar Krentz*

James D. G. Dunn's **Christology in the Making** got deservedly high marks as a significant contribution to New Testament studies in 1980. This second edition (Eerdmans, $30) is an unaltered reprint with a new 29-page foreword that takes account of both laudatory and critical reactions to the first edition. As one reviewer of the first edition said, "an excellent presentation of... complicated material." Careful study of this work will enrich one's understanding of numerous texts, aid in proclamation, and (dare one say it) deepen one's commitment to the Lord of the church. *Edgar Krentz*

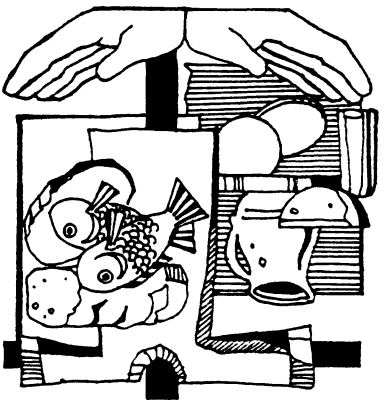
J. Christiaan Beker's **Heirs of Paul: Paul's Legacy in the New Testament and in the Church Today** first appeared in 1991. Beker shows how Acts and the deutero-Pauline appropriate Paul's theological insights for new situations. The unaltered reprint by Eerdmans ($16) keeps this interesting book available for study and reflection. Welcome it. *Edgar Krentz*

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Preaching Helps

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost—Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, Series C

Poet of Poverty and Riches



Luke speaks poetry as well as prose, especially near the start of his epic story. In Mary's mouth we find the moving Magnificat with its stunning images of reversal: "God has brought down the mighty from their thrones and has exalted the lowly; God has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty" (1:52-53).

In his inaugural sermon Jesus stood up in the synagogue, searched through the scroll for the right passage, and then read poetry of Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18; cf. 7:22). Jesus then sat down, the posture of the Jewish teacher, and delivered a very short sermon: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (Actually the Greek says that "all the eyes" in the synagogue were on him, and Jesus said that scripture had come true in their "ears.")

And his ministry did fulfill the promise of Isaiah. Besides all the words and deeds of Jesus concerning poverty which Luke records in common with Matthew and Mark, Luke reports sayings on rich and poor not found elsewhere. Many of those uniquely Lukan narrations are featured in the central section of the Pentecost season which we are now entering. They begin with the parable of the fellow we call "the rich fool" (Luke 12:13-21) and extend down to the parable of that other rich fool, that one who had a neighbor named Lazarus (16:19-31).

Luke, more than the other evangelists, paints Jesus as friend of the poor. And then in his second volume, Luke shows how most folks in the earliest Christian communities seem to have caught the lesson. Or was it the Spirit they caught? They are consistently, and I think quite deliberately, pictured by Luke as actively and compassionately friendly toward the poor.

The early Christians of Jerusalem practiced some kind of sharing of possessions (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35). Joseph Barnabas (4:36-36) is praised for his generosity, while Ananias and Sapphira made a name for themselves by pretending to be generous while lying about it (5:1-11). Discord over the daily distribution (an early Christian institution carried over from synagogue practice) led to the selection of the Seven (we aren't supposed to call them "deacons" because that would be anachronistic, but they were set aside to serve, διακονεω, Acts 6:1-7). Simon is severely criticized for thinking he could pay money and so purchase a short course of instruction in how to receive the gift of the Spirit (8:18-24). How many of us, on the other hand, might sign him up with a promise to teach him spirituality for a fee? Dorcas (Tabitha) is singled out as a model of giving (9:39) and Cornelius is recommended by angels as a giver of alms (10:2).

The believers in Antioch (where the believers were first called "Christians") did not neglect to send famine relief to their fellow believers in Jerusalem (11:27-30). Paul was bad for business in Philippi (16:19) and Ephesus (19:23-27), and commercial interests in both places, suffering an economic downturn because of his activities, struck out in retaliation against him. In his farewell speech to the Ephesian elders at the conclusion of his "third missionary journey" (Luke thematizes the life of Jesus as a journey and Paul's life-work as a series of journeys), Paul could hardly think of a better thing to say about himself than "I coveted no one's silver." And then he quoted Jesus, and of all the sayings of Jesus that he might have offered on that occasion he chose to recall how Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:33-35). On trial in Jerusalem, Paul said, "I came (here) to bring my nation alms" (24:17), and he looked innocent to the governor, but Felix kept him in prison anyway, because "he hoped to get a bribe of money from Paul" or the friends of Paul (24:26).

Why all the talk about money in Luke-Acts? Many have answered in terms of the situation facing Luke and the Lukan communities (a situation which we know very imperfectly!). It may be that Luke addressed communities of poor Christians in order to console and encourage them. Some have seen that kind of answer in the first of the beatitudes. "Poor now? You will be filled later on when the kingdom comes in its fullness!" (Luke 6:20) But that's not an adequate interpretation of the beatitude. The persuasive power of the beatitude derives in large part from the fact that it is spoken by Jesus, who enriched the poor every time he touched them or spoke to them or sat down with them. He incarnated an ennobling and enriching energy, and he calls disciples to be the same kind of presence. And we do not know for a fact that Luke's community was poor.

Might it be that Luke was addressing primarily well-to-do Christians, hoping

to nudge them (or shame them) into acts of generosity? Or was Luke not writing for insiders, whether poor or comfortable, but did he instead have in view some wealthy outsiders, who were hesitating to become insiders, wondering about the cost of their contemplated discipleship?

Did Luke want all Christians to sell all their goods? (See the story of the ruler in Luke 18:18-27.) Or might dispensing with half our goods prove to be sufficient? (See the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19.) Sometimes Jesus was happy to see two silver denarii well spent (as by the Good Samaritan, 10:25-37), and even the gift of two thin coppers could elicit praise, but of course these were the lavish gift of a widow giving it all away! (20:1-4)

Arguments about the precise nature of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira usually end up saying that no one was required to give away everything. The early church did not turn total self-giving into a rule. However, that unhappy couple made the mistake of trying to serve God and Mammon, with one leg in heaven and the other in the bank, while posturing before the community as having done something as daring as the widow, or the Samaritan, or their fellow-Jerusalemite Barnabas (Acts 5).

I don't think that Luke is picturing Jesus as an economist with some fresh theories about wealth, or as a politician with some new rules or laws about money. Luke himself was not a first century Karl Marx, nor was he Alan Greenspan. Luke offers up his portraits of Jesus and of the early communities, not as mandate or regulation, not as model or pattern to be imitated blindly. They serve instead as poetic, prophetic and provocative portraits capable of striking powerful blows at our consciences and moving us to critical self-examination and to greater daring in our use of our resources. They are visions or epiphanies of the coming kingdom and set the Spirit of God blowing through our imaginations so that our old uses of money are deconstructed, and we are awakened to fresh possibilities.

Luke would certainly stir the hearts and hands and heads of our current communities so that we would be places where the poor might feel blessed rather than cursed, beheld instead of invisible, lifted up instead of further cast down, enfolded rather than endlessly marginalized.

In the series of pericopes between the two rich fools (Luke 12 and Luke 16), one amazing narrative is omitted. What happened to the Prodigal Son? OK. I just looked it up, and, of course, the RCL has it in Lent (Lent 4). But Luke interweaves stories of money and stories of home and table. And I miss the prodigal in this sequence of gospel readings. Was it Robert Frost who said that "home is the place where, when you get there, they have to take you in"? The

Christian story is all about home and family and table, a new home and a new family and a new table.

The current issue of *The Lutheran* (I'm talking "current" as of the moment of this writing which is mid-March!) reports on Jerry Evinrud's collection of art depicting the Prodigal Son. Jesus' parable of those two sons and their waiting father (waiting for both of them to come to their senses or just come home) touches the heart and stirs the imagination. And in syllable after syllable in his speech, as in deed after deed of his action, Jesus expands our understanding of brother and sister, father and mother, son and daughter. Sometimes he seems anti-family (as in Luke 12:49-56, Pentecost 11), but his words deconstruct one kind of clannish, tribal, nationalistic thinking about family to make room for God's new family, new home, new table and new sharing.

Art about the prodigal is moving because the themes of the parable are moving. A son was lost, as good and dead and buried, and then he returned home. And his father took him in. The son was forgiven, reconciled, embraced, let in. The parable does not talk about the stewardship of money. Or it's a story of bad stewardship with a happy ending. The prodigal, who insulted and shamed his father so deeply and then wasted his entire inheritance, did not have the door slammed in his face when he returned home.

The following story, the one about the clever steward, is an interesting twin with the parable of the prodigal. Many of the same themes resound, especially the picture of being received into habitations. The two stories are enriched by a comparison, as all the stories in this section of Pentecost are enriched when read as part of Luke's poetry of poverty and wealth.

John Donahue has written that "the sharing of material goods is symbolic of a deeper level of community; gross inequalities of goods destroy community." The rich fool's desire for "more, always more" finally doomed him to a lonely death, surrounded by less. He died not in the midst of sons and daughters with friends and family. At the end all he had in hand were those blueprints sketching out his big plans for larger barns and taller silos. His riches blinded him to God's presence and left him deaf to God's voice and cut him off from every "neighbor." (Donahue's *The Gospel in Parable* has a rich section on wealth and poverty in Luke.)

Fred Danker once wrote that "God's people often forget that the proper use of material possessions is an integral part of their total religious experience" (*Jesus and the New Age*, p. 174).

Luke writes the way every good preacher speaks: no self-righteous scolding,

no voice raised in melodramatic shouting, no guilt-inducing legalism, no cheap moralizing. He does not elevate himself above his hearers or carve out some sphere of immunity for himself. He deals seriously and yet joyously with some of the deep things of the human heart, our insecurity that traps us into greediness and our desire, sometimes slim, to form communities of authentic sharing. And with it all his words are wonderfully crafted, poetic, and healing. So even when he talks to us—no, it's better to say talks "with" us—about money, he manages to be Luke the Artist and Luke the Beloved Physician.

It's tricky business to speak realistically but not crankily about money and its uses. The topic is extraordinarily important in our mostly prosperous and thoroughly consumerist society. For a writer for this issue I lifted up my eyes (again) to Iowa, turning to a preacher who has been in these pages previously. For the reflections in this issue, I give heartfelt thanks to **Barbara Wills**, Pastor of St. Peter Lutheran Church in Garnavillo, Iowa, and of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Peace in Clayton. How does she get around out there? She tells me that she got her motorcycle license last summer and now rides a Yamaha Virago 750. She does not actually say that she rides this bike on pastoral calls, but she does say that riding it is a great way to relieve stress after a hectic day. I think I will just take her word for it.

This is not the first time that Barbara has contributed reflections for Preaching Helps. She wrote for all of us back in 1992 and then again in 1994. Who knows when her words may find their way to these pages again in the future! I thank her for her gifts of time and energy expended on our behalf.

I contemplate with gratitude the vivid portraits painted by Luke of Jesus and early Christian saints. I am deeply appreciative of the work of Barbara Wills. And I think with awe of all you crafty crafters of word and image, speaking prose and poetry from the pulpits of the land week after week.

Yours in the Service of the Word,

Robert H. Smith
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Ninth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 13 August 2, 1998

Psalm 49:1-12
Ecclesiastes 1:2,12-14; 2:18-23
Colossians 3:1-11
Luke 12:13-21

First Reading

Where do we find life? Jesus tells us that it is not in the abundance of our material possessions that we find the fullness of life (ζωή), but in the richness of our relationship with God. To covet and strain for more and more of this world's goods leads only to death—to the loss of one's inmost being (ψύχη).

The rich man in today's parable sought to hold on to the things of this world, and through them attempted to live fully. He told himself (ψύχη) he would build bigger and better barns in which to store his plenty, and depending on that bounty, he would live in style for many years. He would rest, eat, drink, and enjoy the fruits of his past labor. He would live the life of the idle rich.

Unfortunately for this rich man, money can't buy everything. It could not buy a long life (ζωή), nor could it purchase the favor of God. "Ἄφρων!" "Fool!" says God. "This night your soul is demanded of you. And these you have prepared, whose will they be?" (literal translation)

A fool is one who lacks judgment or sense. That this rich man lacked proper judgment is apparent, in that he put ultimate trust in perishable things and ignored the One who wields the power of life, death, and eternity.

Pastoral Reflections

All is vanity, according to the Teacher in Ecclesiastes. Worry and stress lead only to more worry and stress. Working only for gain robs the joy from life. Amassing possessions leads to enslavement by the very things we seek to own and control. Look at the rich farmer in the text from Luke. All his planning and work were in vain, they were as nothing in the end. He died at the moment he thought he had gained the world—and all his gain was left behind for the use of those who had not sold their souls for it.

This parable about the rich farmer who tried to make a secure future for himself and retire in style hits a little too close to home for most of us. We live in a society that stresses the importance of material wealth and preparing for a secure future with insurance policies, IRAs and other assorted investments. Even the church gets involved by setting up pension plans for pastors and helping us learn to make wise investments. Is Jesus saying we shouldn't prepare for the future? Is he condemning those in our society who retire while still in good health and then live off their pensions and social security?

It is important that we realize how wealthy we are in the global scheme of things. There is nothing wrong with putting aside funds for our later years as long as we don't ignore our obligations in regard to our neighbors. Few, if any of us, can count on our children to provide for us in old age as people in Jesus' time did. I cannot think that impoverishing ourselves to the point that we become a burden on society is good stewardship of the gifts God has given us. But the Christian mandate is always to give sacrificially and to reach out to those in need.

Notice that the farmer in the parable was thinking only of his own desires. He was tearing down perfectly good barns in order to build much bigger ones in which he could hoard his wealth for his exclusive use. We should take note of his greed, and monitor our own greedy tendencies. Are we giving

as much as we can to the mission of the church? How much money do we waste on trivialities? Greed is a sickness of the soul that may very well keep us from seeing the needs of our neighbors.

A Hymn
"We Give Thee but Thine Own" (*Lutheran Book of Worship* #410), a hymn written by William W. Howe, reminds us that nothing we strive for belongs to us. Everything is a gift from God intended to be used for the good of all. We are stewards of these gifts, and it is our responsibility to use them to the glory of God.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 14 August 9, 1998

Psalm 33:12-22
Genesis 15:1-6
Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16
Luke 12:32-40

First Reading
Just what is the βασιλεία, the kingdom of heaven? Jesus used many metaphors and stories to describe it. It's as if he held a huge, multifaceted diamond in his hand and turned it this way and that, trying to capture in inadequate human language the full beauty of this priceless treasure.

The kingdom is worth more than any amount of human wealth. Jesus invites his little flock to sell the temporary and purchase the eternal. "Sell your possessions and give alms." "Throw off the constraints of earthly mammon so you will be free to receive the heavenly treasure."

Then Jesus twists his wrist, and we see a totally unexpected sparkle deep in the heart of the stone. One of the blessings of the kingdom is that the slaves will be served by the master! Servants were obliged to wait up for their lord when he was out for the evening so they could help him get ready for bed, serve him food or wine, and close up the house for the night. No doubt, some stayed up all night to guard the house.

But Jesus tells us that the returning master in the heavenly kingdom will serve his slaves who are awake when he arrives! This is the unthinkable. It is indeed an unexpected source of joyful anticipation beyond any hope that earth can provide!

Pastoral Reflections
Where is your focus? Too often we find ourselves looking everywhere but up. We look at the growing pile of bills on the desk, the dwindling figures in our checkbooks, the too-small shoes of our children and their growing appetites, and we feel that empty gnawing in the pits of our stomachs. How will we ever have enough? The church keeps harping on financial stewardship, our neighbors all have new cars (we keep praying that the old clunker in the driveway won't give up the ghost before next spring), and that pain in your back really needs to be checked out by a doctor. And Jesus says, "Don't worry!"

Life is hard. Jesus knows that life is hard. But he also knows all the things that we don't know. He knows that the bills will somehow get paid, that this stressful time will eventually pass, and that our time on earth is a mere breath in the scope of eternity. He knows that the kids' need for shoes and driving a worn-out car will not condemn us to hell. He tells us to step back and get an eternal perspective. Time is moving forward, and his return is imminent—at least from the cosmic perspective. We need to get ready for his return.

As the turn of the century speeds closer we will hear more and more predictions about the end of time. But for any of us the

end could be at any moment. We are all a mere heartbeat, a scant breath, away from Christ's return. Let's look up, away from the fears and worries that drag us away from the things of God. Trust Jesus, and let God work out our problems for us.

A Hymn

"Day by Day" (*Lutheran Harmony* #223), a hymn written by Carolina Sandell Berg (1832-1903), offers us the reminder that God provides for us each day. We are not given all the answers for the future, but simply the assurance that our Lord will guide us through each day. And that is enough. As the Apostle Paul discovered when he prayed for the removal of his "thorn in the flesh," God's grace is sufficient.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 15 August 16, 1998

Psalm 82
Jeremiah 23:23-29
Hebrews 11:29–12:2
Luke 12:49-56

First Reading

How do we read Jesus? He comes speaking of life and God's eternal kingdom, and Peter wants to know to whom he's talking (v. 4). Who has to pay attention? Who will be included, who excluded? Who will be held responsible, and who let off the hook?

In verse 54, Jesus turns to include the crowds with Peter and the others: "And he said καὶ (also) to the crowds: 'Hypocrites! You recognize the signs for a change in weather, but you totally disregard the warnings that are given to alert you to the καιρός of God!'" Jesus has been telling parable after parable about being awake/alert/prepared for the coming of the Lord, and the people want to know to whom he speaks! He describes his own ordeal of suffering and trauma, and they are silent. He speaks of ripping apart the social fabric—divisions rather than peace, father turning against son and daughter against mother—and they act as if he has said nothing.

The disciples perceive Jesus as a rabbi who tells them interesting teaching stories. The crowds see him as a miracle worker who will ease their pains and give them free bread. And we, how do we discern Jesus?

Pastoral Reflections

As the year 2,000 approaches, ever closer, we think more and more about the end times. We hear dire predictions and doomsday prophets creatively imagining all sorts of fantastic and fatalistic scenarios. Some "prophets" write and sell books and stories about their imaginings, garnering a tidy profit from their efforts. (One is tempted to wonder how these "prophets for profit" are investing their temporal gains with the expectation of the end so near, or if they disbelieve their own words.) Others stockpile food and weapons, preparing themselves to survive the holocaust at the expense of others' needs—as if one could survive an upheaval of such cosmic proportions and divine origin. Still more sell their goods and prepare to passively await their rapture into heaven, intent on leaving the uninitiated to their fate (assuming that it is the chosen who will be taken up to "glory" and not the rejected being whisked away to damnation!).

How do Jesus' words fit with the world's understanding of the end times? He didn't sell the story to make a fortune, or kill his tormentors so he could survive. He spoke of giving, not taking, offering himself up on the cross to give us life in its fullness. He didn't walk away from his responsibilities or ignore the pain and suffering that surrounded

him. Even with his eyes to the future, he cared for those caught in the present.

Jesus says we are to be prepared for his return—preparing ourselves by being faithful to his commands, having pure hearts and open hands, loving and forgiving, sharing and trusting. The divisions are inevitable: The faithful will be rejected by the faithless, the true rejected by the false, and in the judgment, the sheep will be rewarded while the goats are destroyed.

None of us knows when the καιρος will come, but each day we encounter the inbreaking of our Lord. An interruption by the phone brings a story of heartache with the need for a listening ear and a word of concern. An illness stops our headlong rush through life, challenging our faith and giving us opportunities for deeper reflection and prayer. Thwarted plans force us down a different path where we discover new visions and vistas we had not know were there. Each day our Lord speaks to us of his καιρος and offers us the opportunity to understand and reinterpret his message.

A Hymn

"The Advent of Our God" (*LBW* #22), written by Charles Coffin and translated by John Chandler, reminds us that Jesus is both servant and judge. Yet we may not recognize his servanthood, cast in the mold of humility and suffering, and we may deceive ourselves concerning his role as judge.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 16 August 23, 1998

Isaiah 58:9b-14
Psalm 103:1-8
Hebrews 12:18-29
Luke 13:10-17

First Reading

It seems that there has always been controversy over how to keep the Sabbath in a way that is pleasing to God. There are many lists of rules, both in the Bible and in various denominational traditions, that direct us. The problem with such rules, however, is that we may become fixated on them and lose a sense of what the Sabbath is really about.

In the creation story we are told that God finished the work of creating on the sixth day and set aside the seventh, the Sabbath, as a day of rest. When the Ten Commandments were given to Moses there were explicit instructions concerning the Sabbath—*no one* was to labor on this day of rest, not even slaves or animals. The Sabbath was to be set aside as a day to rest and honor God. It was a day to remember God's mercy, and to celebrate God's steadfast love.

In our Gospel lesson today, Jesus celebrates the Sabbath by worshipping at the synagogue and freeing a crippled woman from her affliction. Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, keeps his focus on the positive side of the law, doing those things that honor his Father on this day. His critics are those who focus on the negatives associated with the Sabbath: "You shall not...." They are the ones who turn keeping the Sabbath holy into another form of work. Jesus scolds them for thus dishonoring his holy day. The focus of Sabbath-keeping is always God. We keep the Sabbath appropriately when what we do gives glory to our Lord.

Pastoral Reflections
We live in a society that dishonors the Sabbath by ignoring it. A favorite form of recreation for many families is going shopping on Sunday. Many of us eat out after worship services on this day. The first day of the week, the day the church has set aside to celebrate Sabbath in honor of Christ's resurrection, is just another business day for many people. Empty pews are a stark testimony to this trend in society. Even people who would like to be in worship on Sunday morning are sometimes unable to be there because of their jobs. Fewer and fewer employers are willing to give people time off for worship when they are scheduled to work.

There are no simple solutions to the problem of keeping the Sabbath. On the one extreme, we can point to the martyrs who were willing to give up everything in order to practice their faith. On the other, we can give up and consider that honoring the Lord's Day is passé. There will always be tension between the church and the world. Our task is to point the way and trust the Holy Spirit.

In approaching the subject of keeping the Sabbath, we need to remember that the ones we are preaching to are present in worship. The sermon cannot reach the absentees, unless it is being broadcast, and they are listening! Yet we can offer help and guidance to those people in the pews who, like us, still experience the tension between what the church teaches and what society allows.

This Gospel text helps us in our task by showing how Jesus understood the Sabbath as a time for worship, a time for doing what honors God, and a time for celebrating God's mercy. We can remind people that the focus of the Lord's Day is God. We can encourage activities that offer rest and refreshment. We can also do our best to practice what we preach!

A Hymn
"O Day of Rest and Gladness" (*LBW* #251), a hymn by Christopher Wordsworth, is appropriate to use with a sermon on the topic of Sabbath keeping. It brings out the themes of restfulness, celebration, and worship.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 17 August 30, 1998

Psalm 112
Proverbs 25:6-7
Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16
Luke 14:1, 7-14

First Reading
Jesus was frequently invited out, often to the homes of well-to-do people. He was invited to weddings and dinners, to banquets and suppers. He was invited by fishermen, tax collectors, and even Pharisees. As we reflect on his parable in Luke 14:12-14, we may wonder if he often questioned the motives of his hosts. My own prejudice causes me to wonder about a Pharisee who would give such a dinner on the Sabbath. Who did the cooking and serving?

The first verse of this chapter reminds us that the Pharisees were usually out to get Jesus, and when he did go to their homes to eat, he frequently found their hospitality wanting. Think of Simon, who failed to provide water for Jesus' feet (Luke 7). No doubt, the motives of his pharisaic hosts were sometimes questionable. Maybe they were keeping an eye on Jesus, hoping he would trip himself up when they were there to act as witnesses. Or, perhaps hosting this rebel rabbi was a social coup. Possibly some of them, like Nicodemus, were simply seeking the truth.

Jesus' parable to this particular host

suggests that he had something to gain from each of the guests at his house that day. They had apparently all chosen seats of honor, suggesting that they were men accustomed to receiving deference from their hosts. What the host wanted from Jesus is not entirely clear, since he didn't have a means of returning the invitation, but we can be fairly certain there would be something this Pharisee hoped to gain.

Jesus, in effect, added another beatitude in his advice to his host: Μακάριος—"Blessed" shall you be—when you invite the poor, maimed, lame, and blind, for they cannot pay you back. The poor and hungry are blessed now (Luke 6:20-23), but the rich must await their blessing. It will come at the resurrection for those who are just (see Matthew 25:31-46), who use their wealth with humility and generosity. Was Jesus' host insulted by such advice? Would we be insulted, or would we merely discount his words as those of someone who isn't really in touch with reality?

Pastoral Reflections

We have all heard the maxim: "Pride goeth before a fall." Imagine how humiliating it would be to seat yourself at the head table at a state dinner and then be approached by the President or another important member of the government and asked to move. This is the scene that Jesus sets for his listeners. In our daily associations this might never happen. We live in a culture that encourages egalitarian seating, round tables, and relaxed manners. Still, we can relate to the idea of such an embarrassing situation. All of us have at some time made wrong assumptions and harbored misconceptions about our relationships with others. Most of us have at least occasionally been subjected to thoughtlessness and lack of consideration. Public humiliation is embarrassing and something we try to avoid.

In our faith life Jesus tells us that approaching situations with humility is the way to go. When we assume a superior attitude toward others, whether in the choice of a seat or the people with whom we prefer to associate, we are headed for trouble. To consider ourselves better than others, to think that we deserve a better seating arrangement or more prestigious friends, is to lose sight of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. God chose the path of humility. Our Lord and Master came not to be served, but to serve.

We may think we will be disgraced if we associate with the "lowly," the outcasts, if we wear used or inexpensive clothing or drive an old car. Some young people are mortified if they don't wear the right brand of shoes or jeans. We too often consider humble or non-conformist objects and actions to be embarrassing. My husband and I began riding motorcycles a couple of years ago. Before that, motorcycles, their riders and equipment made us uneasy—all that freedom, daring, and black leather were just a bit too intimidating. Since getting our own bikes our attitudes have changed 180 degrees. Now we're the ones who make people uncomfortable with our bikes and black leather. Sometimes that's embarrassing to us, but the joy of the ride makes it worth every uncomfortable moment.

In some ways, being a follower of Christ is like riding motorcycles. We are called to be different. We are called to live outside the narrow confines of the world's expectations, to welcome the socially unacceptable, and to see Christ in our neighbor. This is sometimes uncomfortable or embarrassing, but the joy of living in Christ makes it all worthwhile.

A Hymn

"Take My Life, that I May Be" (*LBW* #406) was written by Frances R. Havergal. It reminds us that we are not our own, that we

are called to spend ourselves in the service of Christ. This is a service of humility and compassion, a service that allows no room for arrogance or self-aggrandizement.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 18 September 6, 1998

Psalm 1
Deuteronomy 30:15-20
Philemon 1-21
Luke 14:25-33

First Reading

Discipleship is costly. There is no way we can straddle the fence when it comes to following Jesus. Jesus tells the crowds who come to him that they must detest (μισεῖ) the things of this life—including their closest family members and friends—in order to follow him. They must carry the burdens of discipleship, taking up the accursed and hated cross. They must bid farewell (ἀποτάσσεται) to all their possessions.

This is a troublesome passage for us. The commandments tell us to honor our parents and remain faithful to our spouses. Jesus himself tells us to love our neighbors, and he also accepted the hospitality of those with many possessions. What does he mean, then, with these words to the crowd?

One of the ironies of life is that the things we think we possess, in fact, possess us. When we hold on to things, we are as bound as they are. A master is as ensnared by slavery as the slave. Jesus came to set us free—free from sin and idolatry, free from the snares and entanglements of the world. Our slavery to things and people will keep us from being faithful to Christ because we cannot serve two masters. It is necessary to let go of whatever takes our loyalty away from our Lord Jesus.

One way to let go is to literally and physically distance ourselves from our relationships and belongings—abandon our families and give everything away. The problem with this approach is that it leads us into other sins: Pride in our great sacrifices and betrayal of those who depend on us. The other approach is to do as Paul did: act as if we owned nothing and be content with whatever we have. In Philippians 3:8 he says, "I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ." He goes on to say (4:11b-12), "I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need."

Being free from the enslavement of this world makes us generous and compassionate people. Trusting Christ gives us the courage to take risks for the good of others. Letting go of the questionable values of the world frees us to put God's will first in our lives.

Pastoral Reflections

Jesus has been called not only "the Word of God" but also "God's Wisdom." Today's text from Luke is a lesson in wisdom. One does not set out upon a course of action without careful planning. Contractors consider the cost of labor and materials before beginning a building, so that they do not get the project partly done and run out of money or materials. To do so would make them look foolish, destroying a professional reputation and ruining them financially. Nor would a government leader go to war without carefully planning a strategy and figur-

ing out the chances of winning—especially if outnumbered! To do so would mean the waste of many lives and the utter destruction of the nation.

There were many people who wanted to be Jesus' followers. What attracted them? Was it his power to heal? Perhaps they wanted a miracle worker. Was it Jesus' criticism of the establishment? Possibly they were looking for a rebel to oust the old regime. Was it the bread in the wilderness when Jesus fed the 5,000? It could be that people were looking for "easy street" and thought Jesus was the one who could lead them there. Whatever the reason for Jesus' popularity, he was the man of the hour. He attracted the crowds like the Pied Piper of Hamlin attracted rats and children.

Jesus knew that few of those who followed him really knew or cared about the sacrifices inherent in being his disciple. They were not looking for discipline. So he turned to them and issued another of many such warnings. Far from being the easy way out of life's problems, discipleship means meeting problems head-on. It means putting Jesus first and hating those who would come between them and their Lord. It means taking up the cross and bearing it faithfully for Christ—whatever form that cross might take and wherever it might need to be carried.

Forget the idea that being a disciple will fill your mouth with easy bread! Being a disciple means giving up all claim to material goods and possessions. Rather than garnering luxuries, discipleship means breaking the claim that possessions make on us. It means counting everything as loss in order to know and follow Christ.

Those who are wise will count the cost of discipleship. They will follow with eyes and ears open and hearts set unfalteringly upon the course ahead of them. The foolish will skip blithely along while the going is easy and abandon the race when the road gets rough.

A Hymn

"Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult" (*LBW* #494) was written by Cecil Frances Humphreys Alexander (1823-1895), an Irish woman who wrote many hymns and scripturally-based poetry. She and her sister established a school for the deaf prior to her marriage to the Reverend William Alexander, and later she would walk miles daily to minister to the sick and poor, regardless of their religious beliefs. This hymn reflects Jesus' call to each of us to set aside the standards of the world and respond to his summons to reach out in humility and service to our neighbor.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 19 September 13, 1998

Psalm 51:1-10
Exodus 32:7-14
1 Timothy 1:12-17
Luke 15:1-10

First Reading

One of the ironies of today's parables from Luke is that the Pharisees and scribes are showing their own stinginess of heart and need for repentance in their criticism of Jesus and the other sinners he receives. It reminds me of a scene from the movie *Titanic*. The heroine's mother looks down her nose at a young man from "below decks" when introduced to him. She herself is penniless and trying to marry her daughter off to a wealthy man so that she will not have to take in sewing to support herself. She is blind to her own poverty, concentrating on the lack she sees in another.

Jesus tells the self-righteous Pharisees and scribes that there is more rejoicing in heaven, and before the angels of God, over one obvious sinner who returns to God than over ninety-nine good people (δικαίοις) who are already there (or think they are!). Since we know that no one is without sin, Jesus is obviously telling them that the joy is for anyone who repents.

When we take pride in our own (supposed) goodness, we are on shaky ground. We seem to have a particular blindness toward our own faults, especially when we keep score, and our score seems to be getting higher. Unfortunately, the self-righteous think they are playing Pinochle when the game is Hearts. Their "high score" becomes a liability and makes them the losers. Jesus tells us that, in the kingdom of God, it is the one with the lowest score—the one losing it all—who wins.

Pastoral Reflections

Συγχάρητέ μοι! "Rejoice with me, for I have found what was lost," says the man who has found his sheep. I have reached the age or the stage in life where I constantly lose things: Keys, letters, jewelry, books—you name it, and I have probably lost it. I turn the house upside down, digging around in closets, suitcases, and garbage cans. I rummage around in my brain, trying to remember where I was when I last had the item. What room was I in? Where did I go next? What else was I holding? What was I thinking about?

Sometimes the item never surfaces, but when it does, I feel like I am on top of the world. It doesn't have to be anything expensive that was lost for me to feel this happiness, but I must admit to a special sense of joy and relief the day I found the misplaced income tax estimate checks! To find what was lost brings life back into balance. We feel complete again.

When Jesus told the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, he was talking about God's joy and relief when a lost person repents and returns to the Lord's loving embrace. Just as a man or woman will share their delight with friends and neighbors when they find something that was lost—maybe even throw an impromptu celebration party—so God shares the joy of a returned sinner with all the hosts of heaven. Our joy is a mere shadow when compared to God's, for if we can feel so good about finding something so perishable and of such temporary significance, imagine the jubilation when an immortal soul is retrieved!

A Hymn

"There Were Ninety and Nine" is a little known hymn, #373 from *The Army and Navy Hymnal*, copyrighted in 1941 by A. S. Barnes and Company, Inc. The words, based on Luke 15:3-7, were written by Elizabeth C. Clephane. A ballad that retells the parable, this hymn is well worth the search to find it. It recounts the danger to the sheep, the desperation and sacrifice of the searching shepherd, and the jubilant rejoicing that echoed through the heavens when the lost one was returned.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 20 September 20, 1998

Psalm 113
Amos 8:4-7
1 Timothy 2:1-7
Luke 16:1-13

First Readings

The parable of the dishonest steward (οἰκονόμον τῆς ἀδικίας) has always been problematic for me. Here is a guy who is

crafty, unprincipled, and unrepentant—and Jesus commends him to the disciples as an example! Then to top it off, he advises them to make friends with unrighteous mammon so that "they [the rich?] may welcome you into the eternal homes" (v. 9b).

The thought comes that the text must have been violated at some time in the far past, or some of it lost, or someone remembered Jesus' words wrong in the oral tradition. But my objections cannot be proven, and the bottom line is that this is the text we have to work with. Speculations are interesting but beside the point.

If we add verses 14 and 15 to the given text, it puts it in a fuller context and offers some helpful information for evaluating the parable. Verse 14 tells us that "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him." This indicates that the audience may have expanded as Jesus was talking to include the Pharisees. Read with the Pharisees as the targeted audience, Jesus' admonitions to make friends with unrighteous wealth makes more sense. We are told the Pharisees were lovers of money. Jesus said we cannot serve God and wealth. The implication is that the Pharisees served wealth. They also were frequent targets of Jesus' censure, indicating that they had been "fired" from their positions as stewards of God's people. Rejected by Jesus, the Pharisees were admonished to join their own kind. One can easily imagine that the "eternal homes" would be the punishment mentioned in Matthew 25:41: "'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Pastoral Reflections

We have all seen examples of behavior that we have condemned, yet admired for their audacity, shrewdness or irony. Today's parable brings to mind such examples. It may be as simple as a youngster standing up to a bully and fighting, or as bizarre as a man on a subway shooting the hooligans who try to mug him. Such forms of behavior may not be Christ like. People who do such things might be overreacting. Their actions may be morally or ethically wrong. Yet deep inside us, there may be a little hint of admiration or awe for people who have what it takes to stand up for themselves against superior odds.

The dishonest steward is praised by his master, in spite of his dishonesty and all the problems that has caused. He has been fired from his job. Instead of feeling regret for his wrongdoing and trying to make it right so he can possibly get his job back, or at least leave with some sense of showing good faith, this man calls in his master's debtors and makes the wrong even worse. He adds to the dishonesty. Instead of trying to collect from them some of what they owe, he has them doctor the records so it looks like they owe less than they do. This dishonest steward has an almost fanatical regard for his own well-being. Knowing he has lost the job, his concern is not focused on how to soften his master's opinion of him. He is thinking only of feathering his nest, of being certain he has friends who will feel obligated to provide for him when he is out of a job. For this his master commends him.

Jesus said, "The children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light" (v. 8b). It is this shrewdness, this prudence, that the master commends. Think about it. If we Christians put as much effort and ingenuity into serving the cause of Christ as the dishonest steward put into looking out for himself, the church would grow by leaps and bounds. There would be no hunger in the world, no oppression, no skimpy church budgets. We wouldn't need expensive evangelism or stewardship programs. Church members would be tripping over each other to help their

neighbors and to share the good news of God's mercy.

If we put as much effort and concern into being faithful in the little things of the kingdom of God, surely the bigger things would happen, too. If each person in our congregations invited just one person to worship, the Holy Spirit would fill all the pews. If we each made just one phone call a week to a shut-in, none of them would feel forgotten and left out of life. If each of us visited just one person who is grieving and offered a compassionate and listening ear, all who sorrow would feel comforted and begin to heal.

We cannot serve two masters. We can put our interests and fears first and let them dictate our behavior. Or we can put the cause of Christ first, and let that be the guiding force in our lives. We are not called to save the world. (We couldn't if we tried.) Jesus has done that for us. All we're called to do is be faithful in the little things—to be prudent and audacious in serving our Lord.

A Hymn

"Lord, Speak to Us, that We May Speak," *LBW* #403 (originally "Lord Speak to Me, that I May Speak"), is another of Frances R. Havergal's hymns. It is a prayer that encourages our listening to Jesus and following his example. Our witnessing and acts of love are echoes of his grace. This hymn calls us to be faithful in even the small things as our Lord was faithful in all things.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 21 September 27, 1998

Psalm 146
Amos 6:1a, 4-7
1 Timothy 6:6-19
Luke 16:19-31

First Reading

The πλούσιος man wallowed in his wealth. He reclined at his table, stuffing himself daily with rich food. His clothing was of the finest purple and softest linen. Only the best would touch his skin! No doubt his body proportions were as full as his portions of food. He cared only for pleasure, oblivious to the needs of the less well-endowed around him.

At the πλούσιος man's gate reclined another man, a man named Lazarus. Lazarus had been laid there by others, too weak and emaciated to move himself. Hungry and weak, he craved whatever scraps of food were thrown out from the πλούσιος man's table, vying for them with the dogs who roamed the city's streets. Lazarus' body was covered in sores, and dog's tongues were the objects that touched his skin. The animals licked his sores, the only touch of comfort he received.

Time passed, and Lazarus died, released at last from his miserable, pitiable existence. He was lifted up to be cradled and comforted in the bosom of Father Abraham. At last he was warm and fed, no longer craving the πλούσιος man's garbage.

The πλούσιος man also died. His merry-making friends had moved on to greener pastures, and no one mourned his passing. He was buried, alone and forgotten, abandoned to the torments of Hades. Now a pitiable man, he lifts beggar's eyes to Abraham—he who had once disdained to look

down upon the lowly Lazarus—and whines out his misery. He begs that Father Abraham will send Lazarus—still he ignores the man, addressing his speech to Abraham: "Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool my tongue."

But the gates are sealed. Lazarus will no more enter a place of torment, and the πλούσιος man will no longer recline at ease in the cool halls of his mansion. Just as he failed to listen to Moses and the prophets, now Abraham refuses to listen to him. And his brothers for whom he is so concerned, will they listen? Will we?

Pastoral Reflections

Lazarus remains silent and passive throughout this parable. He is helpless, a victim. He is laid by the rich man's gate. Though he craves the waste from the rich man's table, he apparently can do nothing about getting it. He is licked by dogs, and when he dies he is carried up to heaven to lie in the bosom of Abraham. The object of Abraham's and the rich man's conversation, he is neither addressed, nor does he speak.

The wealthy man, on the other hand, is a man of action. He feasts; he puts on his fine clothing. Even when he dies and lies in torment, he lifts his eyes and speaks his piece, seeking help for himself and his brothers.

Does this parable tell us that the poor are always good and the rich always evil? Obviously not, for Abraham in his day was a wealthy man. Is it saying that the passive are acceptable while people of action are not? No, for our Lord sent his disciples out to work, and he himself actively healed diseases, cleansed the temple, and rebuffed his disciples for their treatment of children.

Earlier in this chapter (vv. 14-15), Jesus speaks out against the Pharisees, who were "lovers of money." He said that what is prized by humans is an abomination before God. What is too often prized among us is wealth and power. Wealth blinds us to the needs of others. Power corrupts. The rich man flaunted his wealth before Lazarus and, though he had the power to help him, ignored his needs.

In the Beatitudes Jesus tells us that those who are merciful are blessed. They will receive mercy. To seek our own gratification at the expense of others is an abomination. To taunt them with our plenty while their children are starving and dying from preventable diseases is an abomination.

The rich man's final plea from Hades is that Lazarus might rise from the dead to go and warn his rich and heedless brothers. Abraham reminds him that they already have Moses and the prophets. The law teaches compassion and will not be made void (v. 17), and the prophecies warn against injustice and oppression of the poor. Abraham's final words echo through the centuries: "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." (v. 31)

He was right. Someone has risen, and many still do not listen.

A Hymn

"Amazing Grace" (*LBW* #448), written by John Newton, the converted and reformed slave trader, is a favorite hymn of many. It reminds us that God's amazing grace can still soften stone hearts, and open deaf ears, blind eyes, and closed fists. Even we can hear God's Word when touched by God's grace in Christ Jesus.

Dear Readers...

In my editorial for the April, 1998, issue, I wondered aloud what the technical terms were for a 250th and a 350th anniversary. Three on-their-toes readers solved the problem quickly. A 250th anniversary is one's sesquibicentennial, and a sesquitercentennial denotes one's 350th. A free one-year extension goes out to Kathleen L. Anderson, Kathryn A. Kleinhans, and Jack L. Clayton!

The December 1998 issue of *Currents* will contain more essays in honor of Edgar Krentz:

David Balch, "New Testament Texts and the Issue of Homosexuality."
Mario DiCicco, "What Can One Give in Exchange for One's Life? A Narrative-Critical Study of the Widow and Her Offering."
Everett R. Kalin, "Rereading Romans: Ethnic Issues (or, 'How can I find a gracious community?')"
Marie Noel Keller, "Jesus the Teacher."
David Rhoads, "The Letter of James: Friend of God."
Robert H. Smith, "'Worthy is the Lamb' and Other Songs of Revelation."
Mark I. Wegener, "Philippians 2:6-11—Paul's (Revised) Hymn to Jesus."

—Ralph W. Klein. editor

Currents in Theology and Mission
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
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