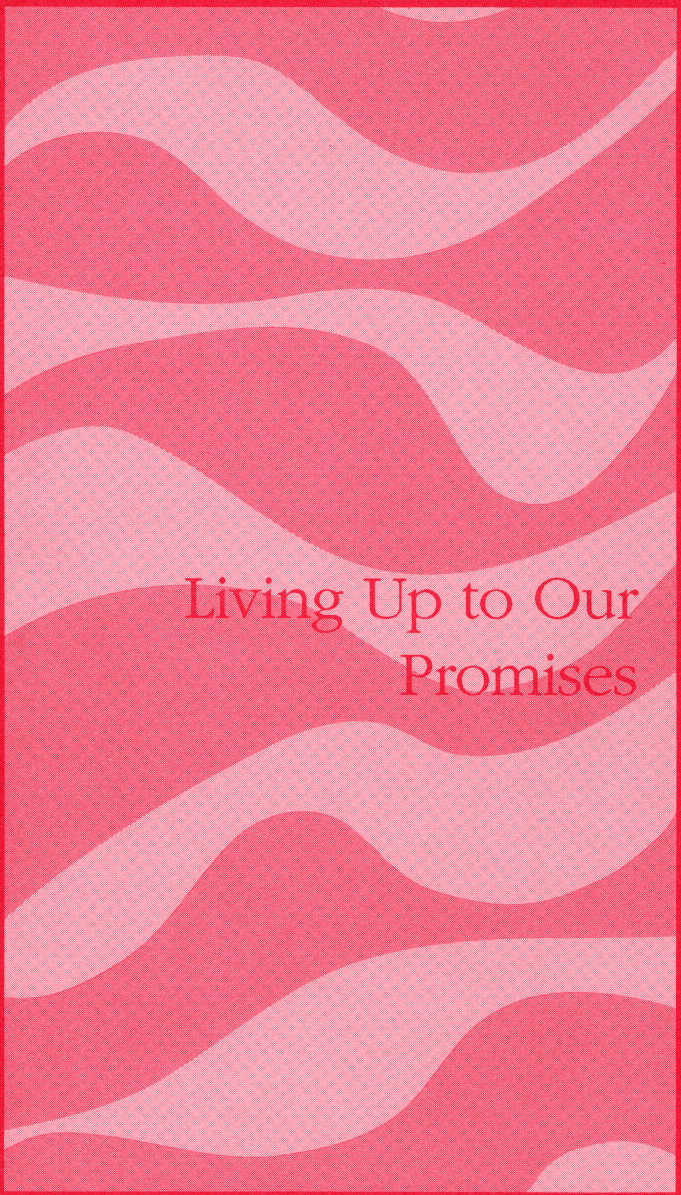
December 1997 Volume 24 Number 6



CURRENTS
in Theology and Mission

Currents

in Theology and Mission

Published by
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

in cooperation with
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Wartburg Theological Seminary

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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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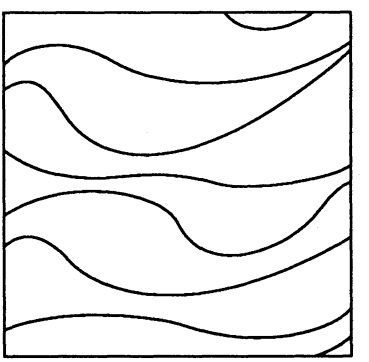
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Living Up to Our Promises

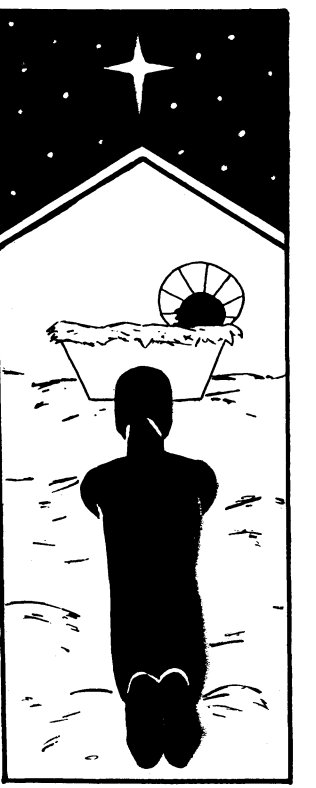
When we asked you to subscribe for *Currents*, we promised you six 80-page issues a year, each filled with crisply edited essays dealing with real life in congregations, scads of book reviews, and preaching helps for every Sunday and major festival. Because of oversize issues for the Hein-Fry, Lesher, and Teaching Theologians' essays, we have actually given you 84 pages more than we promised in this our 24th year—an entire free issue! But in the meantime book reviews generated by our three assistant editors have been piling up like cordwood. That explains why in this issue the balance between essays and reviews tilts toward the latter.

Kathryn A. Kleinhans presents Luther as a resource for post modern theology. Postmodernism, among other things, criticizes the idea that the human subject is an autonomous and self-determining point of reference *and* the notion of reason as a totalizing system. Luther and post modern thinkers are against understanding the human subject as free and self-determining. Luther's anti-rational stance means that theology's proper concern is not the transcendent God, but the God who has revealed Godself in the incarnate Christ and in the written and proclaimed word. Faith functions in a relational capacity, not a cognitive capacity. Faith is saving because through it one is united to Christ the mediator. It allows the believing subject to stand within the dialectic as both saint and sinner.

Robert A. Kelly calls upon Lutheranism to be more counter-cultural in its North American context, which thrives on justification by works. Our culture puts our "needs" at the center of life and suggests that they can be satisfied by appropriate purchases. The radicality of God's promises stands opposed to the ideology of being virtuous, working hard, thinking positively, and developing a winning personality. Just as justification offers a fundamental critique of "religion," so it also offers a fundamental critique of social ideology. Counter-cultural Lutherans will live as a community of people who are different for the sake of the world.

Donna Lynne Seamone observes that spiritual practices are those activities which sustain, nourish, and ground us in the God-given life. The virtual absence of women's experience in formal liturgical settings forces women to seek rituals in the events of daily life. To embrace the ordinary life as the holy life requires public practices in which we enact our becoming—we do not express what we already are. Women in her local congregation have experienced graciousness and an absence of judgment in their small group ministry, and they have gained an enlarged confidence in God's graciousness. In the act of re-presenting themselves to one another, these women have performed themselves into the future.

In an Epiphany sermon **Alison Boden** recalled that the wise men saw the star as an invitation to journey, to adventure, and to possible transformation. We dare not leave Herod out of our Epiphany observances since his heirs and successors are part of our daily challenge. The magi are a reminder that those outside our communities may have a clearer vision and understanding of the truth we seek, which hovers over our heads. They are patrons of all later comers, of all who undergo a tedious journey to come to the truth. Like us, they are also too polite in the face of abusive power and too well-heeled to speak the truth when they have the opportunity. The magi suggest that there will still be kneeling place in the straw whenever we do arrive.



The title of this editorial offered a way to get started, but it is far from the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Human promise-keepers may gather in football stadiums around the country or pound out introductory essays on their laptops, but Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany once more remind us that the real Promise Keeper of this world is the one who cared enough to send the very Best. His signature, inscribed on our foreheads and breasts, empowers us lower-case promise-keepers and challenges us to live in church and society as if it all depended on grace.

Incarnate that!

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Why Now? The Relevance of Luther in a Post-modern Age

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Medieval or Modern?

Much debate has taken place on the question of whether Luther is to be identified more closely with the medieval or the modern age. Numerous scholarly writings, student papers, and Reformation Day sermons have attempted to establish Luther's proper place in history in order to address the question of Luther's relevance (or lack of it) for today. Both rationalists and romantics have claimed to be the heirs of Luther's legacy. The Enlightenment heralded Luther as a founding father not only of modern religious freedom but of modern political and intellectual freedom as well. The Romantic imagination was captured by the striking impression of Luther at the Diet of Worms, the lone monk standing against the forces of papacy and empire, asserting the inviolability of individual conscience—an impression which contributed significantly to the modern privatized understanding of faith. As a more sophisticated historical awareness began to counter these oversimplified understandings of Luther's continuity with modern rationalism and romanticism, Luther's influence was increasingly relegated to the middle ages. Theologians as well as historians contributed to Luther's banishment. Paul Tillich, for example, claimed that the doctrine of justification by faith was the right answer to the religious question of Luther's day but that new answers must be formulated to the new questions of our day.

And so it goes. Whether one chooses to identify Luther as one of the last great medieval thinkers or one of the first great modern thinkers, the question remains academic: in neither case is Luther recognized as a significant resource for contemporary theological thought and contemporary religious life. In an era that is increasingly identified as postmodern, it has become all too easy to dismiss premodern Luther as "chronologically challenged" and therefore irrelevant.

It is my contention that Luther is, in fact, a uniquely significant resource for postmodern theology. In theology and method, Luther stands critically over against

the mindset both of the middle ages which preceded him and of modernity which followed. This critical stance, premodern in its chronology yet antimodern in its outlook, suggests that Luther's thought may well be more compatible with our postmodern context than with the intervening centuries.

Modernity and Postmodernism

Postmodernism is perhaps most succinctly described as the critical rejection of several of the key themes of modernity. In particular, in this essay I choose to focus on postmodernism's *critique of the human subject* understood as an autonomous and self-determining point of reference and its *critique of reason* as a totalizing system.

Philosophical theologian Walter J. Lowe argues that what makes "the critique of the subject" a distinctively postmodern move is that it subverts the traditional opposition between the two modern intellectual movements of Enlightenment rationalism and Romantic optimism. It does this by identifying a certain naive belief in human progress as the common ground of modernity.[1] The postmodern critique of the subject, then, attempts to expose and subvert the inflated claims made for the centrality of the human subject (whether as a rational or a creative being) and for the inevitability of its progress.

Christopher Lasch also identifies a certain naive, and self-serving, understanding of progress as a central theme of the current debate. Lasch uses a scientific model to describe and critique the modern understanding of history as progress; history is believed to be "self-perpetuating" and "self-correcting," features "which allow the [modern] enterprise as a whole to flourish in spite of the constant revision of particular findings."[2]

This equation of *process* with *progress* finds its culminating expression in Hegel. While the language of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis may have become something of a cliche, it would be a serious error to fail to recognize the definitive character of Hegel's contribution to modern thought. In the assessment of Karl Barth, "Hegel's will and achievement in itself does not consist in the invention of the dialectical method as such, but in the invention of a universal method altogether."[3] Although Hegelian dialectics clearly distinguishes a negative moment or movement as a challenge to the point of origin, nevertheless the ultimate goal and inevitable result is a reunification which resolves the contradiction and incorporates all difference back into itself. There is no *continuing* opposition between a thesis and its antithesis, which turn out in the long run to be complementary. The *process* of repeatedly achieving resolution becomes synonymous with *progress*. It is this totalizing project of Hegel's which Barth identifies as distinctively "modern," noting that even those modern thinkers who reject the Hegelian dialectic are engaged in the same fundamental task of attempting to create a synthetic system of knowledge.

This modern faith in reason as a totalizing system is inseparably linked to an

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[1] Walter J. Lowe, "Dangerous Supplement/Dangerous Memory: Sketches for a History of the Postmodern," unpublished manuscript, November 1985, 10-12; published in revised form in *Thought* 61:34-55 (March 1986).

[2] Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991), 48.

[3] Karl Barth, *From Rousseau to Ritschl.* Original translation by Brian Cozens; translation revised by H. H. Hartwell and editorial staff of SCM Press (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1959), 290.

Luther's theology may well prove a uniquely powerful resource in addressing the Christian gospel to postmodern women and men.

increasingly positive valuation of the human person as epistemological subject, since reason implies a reasoning subject and *totalizing* reason implies a reasoning subject with a transcendental vantage-point from which to see and know the whole. Sociologist Robert Bellah and his colleagues describe this modern self-understanding as an "ontological individualism," in which the individual as a free, self-determining subject is assumed to be prior to any social (let alone theological!) context, claim, or obligation. According to Bellah, the modern American "imagine[s] an autonomous self existing independently, entirely outside any tradition and community, and then perhaps choosing one."[4] Indeed, Bellah notes that this ontological individualism is so central to the modern belief system that anything which threatens subjective autonomy is labeled "sacrilegious."[5] The modern individual is the norm against which all else is measured.

The postmodern relevance of Luther

In light of this understanding of the postmodern critique of modernity, what now are the grounds for proposing that Luther's thought is compatible with the postmodern critical perspective and is a useful resource for addressing the postmodern context?

French Roman Catholic Luther scholar Daniel Olivier sets the stage for a postmodern appropriation of Luther. Olivier claims that modern rationalism is the continuation and development of the scholastic rationalism of the medieval church, inasmuch as both are "totalitarian conceptual schemes."[6] Luther's primary challenge to the Roman Catholic Church, then, was not limited to matters of doctrine and ecclesiastical abuse; ultimately, according to Olivier, Luther challenged the Church's fundamental rationalist project.[7] Luther's opposition to modern thought is not at all accidental. To the extent that modern rationalism, as a "totalitarian conceptual scheme," is in continuity with the scholastic rationalism of Luther's day, it should hardly be surprising that Luther's firm rejection of the positive valuation of human capabilities by the philosophers and theologians of his day should find parallels in the postmodern critique of human subjectivity and of totalizing reason. Indeed, in Olivier's reading, had Luther's critique of rationalism not been rejected by humanism and the Enlightenment, Western philosophy and culture would have devel-

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[4] Robert Bellah, *et al.*, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, paperback edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 65 [original publication, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985]. See p. 334 for definition of "ontological individualism."

[5] Bellah, 142.

[6] Daniel Olivier, "Luther's Challenge to Roman Catholicism," in Marilyn J. Harran, ed., *Luther and Learning* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1985), 125.

[7] Olivier, 119.

oped in an entirely different way and might not be in such crisis today. According to Olivier:

> It took centuries before modern thinkers came to the same realization that he [Luther] had reached, that positivism is the real problem in Western culture and learning.... What we are trying today to free ourselves from, Luther made it possible for us never to have entered into![8]

To the extent, then, that modern rationalism and scholastic rationalism both affirm the centrality of the subject's freedom to determine his or her own future, to "make progress" toward a realizable goal, Luther's theology may well prove a uniquely powerful resource in addressing the Christian gospel to postmodern women and men.

Luther's critique of the subject

The language of "critique of the subject" or "critique of subjectivity" must be explained and used carefully. Such language could be used to disguise what is really a precritical move, a critique that is characterized by a simple pessimism about human nature. It is essential to be clear that it is the particular understanding of the human subject as free and self-determining that is the object of postmodernism's critique—and of Luther's!

The scholasticism of the medieval church of Luther's day relied on an idealized understanding of constitutive subjectivity, although its claims about human capability were somewhat limited by its understanding of God. Scholasticism's version of constitutive subjectivity was conveyed in the claim: *Facienti quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam* (God does not deny grace to one who does what is in oneself). God is not excluded as an actor, but the human subject plays an essential part in establishing himself or herself *coram Deo*. Individuals were not the *sole* constituting agents of their subjectivity before God, but their personal agency was required. This theology of the role of individual freedom with respect to salvation is most aptly summed up in the common slogan, "God helps those who help themselves." Even granting the crucial antipelagian claim that "what is in one" is in one by grace, so that one is only cooperating with that prevenient grace, nonetheless to a certain limited extent the individual's own will and works are constitutive components of the individual's final justification and identity before God. God has obligated Godself to reward with saving grace those who respond properly to initial grace; God is under no obligation to justify those who do not so respond.

Luther uses an alternative understanding of human subjectivity to break through the scholastic ideal of subjective self-constitution. The medieval church's soteriology depended on the assertion that the human subject possessed and could actualize certain positive capacities, although not apart from the influence of prevenient grace and the church's sacramental system. For Luther, however, unlike the scholastics, the most essential characteristics of the human subject do not lie in any positive capacities whatsoever. Luther identifies the human subject not in terms of its ability and/or willingness to cooperate with God's grace but in terms of its sinful rebellion against God, in terms of its bound will. For Luther, the strength of the subject is specifically the strength of its sin! Luther understands sin primarily not in terms of acts which individuals do or fail to do but in terms of the orientation of the person *coram Deo*; the sinner's identity is defined by rebellion against God and the idolatrous worship of self. The sinner is *homo incurvatus se*, a

[8] Olivier, 126-8.

person turned in on self. It is clear from this understanding of sin that human subjectivity, in the form of the sinner's egoism, must rightly come under attack in Luther's theology. To the extent that the subject is, and remains, self-centered sinner, "progress" is invalidated as a primary characteristic of human subjectivity and thus also of human history. Luther might well admit the scholastic claim that humans are free to do what is in us. But what is in us is sin, and by doing what is in us, that is by continuing in our rebellion against God, our refusal to relinquish autonomy, we merit not grace but damnation. We may be free *to do* what is in us, but without the freedom *to change* what is in us from sin to righteousness, it is a freedom in name only.

Luther's critique of the rationalist system

Olivier suggests that Luther's antimodern, antirationalist agenda is best understood in light of the negative-dialectical method of twentieth-century critical theorist Theodor W. Adorno. Adorno challenges the concept of dialectic as a synthesizing and totalizing process. For Hegel, dialectical process has a *positive* value; dialectical process is equated with progress. In Adorno's *negative* dialectics, however, there is no synthesis, no resolution, no progress. The negative element in Adorno's dialectic functions critically to undercut the claims of the positive element, yet without establishing, even temporarily, an alternate truth claim. The point of such a critique is to negate not merely a particular thesis or concept but to undermine the whole rationalist enterprise. It is essential to note that this undermining of rationalism is not to be equated with a rejection of *reason itself.* What Adorno rejects is the modern ideology of reason as a self-validating, self-perpetuating, all-encompassing system. It is for this reason that Adorno calls his negative dialectics an "anti-system."[9]

Luther's theology might well be understood as an "anti-system" as well. In addition to its critique of aggrandized human subjectivity, Luther's doctrine of sin functions as a negative-dialectical strategy to critique the rationalistic system of the medieval church, a system which Olivier has characterized as "grace positivism."[10] This identification, "grace positivism," conveys two significant aspects of the systemic nature of medieval Roman Catholicism. First, positivism suggests a *materialistic* understanding for which grace becomes a quantity to be managed: grace is possessed "as a 'treasure' from which to draw advantages."[11] Second, positivism denotes precisely that *totalizing* concept of dialectics which negative dialectics opposes. By integrating all contradictions into new syntheses, positive dialectics becomes totalitarian, in theory and often in practice. According to Olivier, Roman Catholicism's "'infallible' theology of grace" presents just such a totalitarian pattern. Luther's insistence on the radical depth of human sinfulness and the continuing presence of sin even in the Christian subverts grace-positivism's totalizing claims. Sin is the critical element in Luther's negative dialectic, which resists being assimilated into grace as a totalizing synthesis.

The scholastic understanding of sin and grace is clearly rooted in a synthetic model: the presence of grace depends on a certain absence of sin, specifically, the absence of original sin. Thus, for the scholas-

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[9] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), xx.

[10] Olivier, 124.

[11] Olivier, 125.

tic theologians, baptism must remove original sin entirely so that grace may become present.[12] Luther insists as early as the Leipzig debate in 1519 that baptism removes the penalty of original sin but does not remove original sin itself.[13] To Luther's mind, the presence of grace dare not be made dependent on the absence of sin. Indeed, grace can hardly be said to be "present" at all since, properly speaking, grace is not a quality or state ascribed to the Christian but is "the favor of God," which forgives sins.[14] By asserting that sin remains after baptism, Luther critiques the Roman Catholic system of the administration of grace as a quantifiable quality that can be made present, as well as its concept of grace as a synthesis beyond nature and sin.

Yet Luther's use of sin to critique the rationalist system of "grace positivism" does not result in a simple sin-grace dualism. A fundamental expression of Luther's critical posture over against both a totalizing monism and a non-dialectical dualism is his famous understanding of the Christian as *simul iustus et peccator*, at the same time both righteous and a sinner. For Luther, grace does not simply absorb or remove sin, but neither are sin and grace mutually exclusive! It is not the case that some people are sinners while others are righteous; rather, there are those whose only identity is as sinners, and there are those who are given an additional identity so that, while remaining sinners in and of themselves, they are also at the same time judged righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. Grace does not remove or replace sin in the life of the Christian; rather, according to Luther, grace covers over and forgives sin.

If Luther's *simul iustus et peccator* is the fundamental expression of his critical perspective applied to redeemed humanity, Luther's theology of the cross is the fundamental expression of this critical perspective applied to the redeeming God. In fact, Luther's theology of the cross borders on a programmatic critique of non-dialectical dualism in its insistence that divinity and humility are not mutually exclusive categories but that the divine is most clearly manifested precisely in humility and suffering.[15] Over against the usual way of understanding things "metaphysically, ...namely, as things that are apparent and not hidden,"[16] Luther affirms a way of understanding reality as hidden under its opposite (*sub contrario*). It is clear that Luther's objective here is not to provide alternative metaphysical clues to the location of God but rather to challenge scholastic theology's attempts to understand and domesticate God within its metaphysical system. According to Luther,

> the work of God... is never hidden in any other way than under that which *appears contrary to our conceptions*

For Luther, grace does not simply absorb or remove sin, but neither are sin and grace mutually exclusive!

[12] Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 122.

[13] LW 31:317 [The Leipzig Debate].

[14] LW 32:227 [Against Latomus].

[15] LW 31:52f. [Heidelberg Disputation, proofs of theses 19-21].

[16] LW 25:370 [Lectures on Romans, Romans 8:28].

> *and ideas....* And thus just as the wisdom of God is hidden under the appearance of stupidity, and truth under the form of lying—for so the Word of God, as often as it comes, comes in a form *contrary to our own thinking,* which seems in its own opinion to have the truth, so it judges that the Word which is contrary to it is a lie....[17]

The claim that God's work and Word are hidden under their opposite functions as a critique of human expectations and preconceptions about what and where God's work and Word are.

Luther's crucial distinction between the hidden and revealed God is central to a postmodern reappropriation of Luther. Luther rejects the appeal to God as Transcendental Subject, the god characterized by metaphysics, synthesis and reason. It is clear that Luther believes in the *existence* of the transcendent God; nevertheless, Luther's theology has little *interest* in this transcendent God, and in fact Luther insists that this God is none of our business. While Luther would doubtless wince at the language of the radical "death of God" theologians, he must rightly be recognized as one of the first to argue for the *irrelevance* of the onto-theological god for Christian theology and life. "The proper subject of theology," according to Luther, "is man guilty of sin and condemned, and God the Justifier and Savior of man the sinner."[18] Theology's proper concern is not the transcendent God but the God who has revealed Godself to us in the incarnate Christ and in the written and proclaimed Word.

A postmodern understanding of faith

To the extent that Luther's project is not only critical but also soteriological, one cannot avoid confronting the question of whether Luther's theology, in the final analysis, sacrifices its negative-dialectical character in order to reach a certain theological synthesis. If resurrection to eternal life with God in Christ doesn't sound like closure, what does?

Do Luther's faith-claims regarding the believing sinner's new Christic identity and the promise of new resurrected life after death constitute a methodologically inappropriate resolution of his negative-dialectical theology? One's response to the question depends on one's understanding of the relationship between faith and reason in Luther. B. A. Gerrish understands faith and reason in Luther's theology as somewhat parallel cognitive capacities, each assigned to a separate sphere: reason is "the appropriate organ of knowledge" only for mundane reality while faith is the appropriate organ of knowledge for spiritual reality.[19] Thus, according to Gerrish, "Reason is indicted only when caught trespassing" on faith's domain.[20] Gerrish's identification of faith as, like reason, an "organ of knowledge" enables him to conclude: "Hence reason is incorrect thinking about God, just as faith is correct thinking, and the grounds for Luther's condemnation are reason's fundamental misunderstanding of God."[21]

If Gerrish were correct in identifying faith as an organ of knowledge for Luther, then Luther's faith-claims would indeed function to synthesize or bring closure to Luther's negative-dialectical theology. It is clear, however, *contra* Gerrish, that Luther is not arguing on cognitive or epistemological grounds. Luther condemns unregener-

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[17] LW 25:366, 438f., emphasis added [Lectures on Romans, Romans 8:26, 12:2].

[18] LW 12:311 [commentary on psalm 51].

[19] B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 20.

[20] Gerrish, 84.

[21] Gerrish, 90.

ate reason not because it thinks incorrectly about God but because its totalizing disposition leads it to usurp God's place. Sin distorts human reason not only by blocking its ability to know God but even more so by perverting its orientation so that it sees itself, rather than God, as central. The deadly critique which Luther directs at the sinful human subject is not a punishment for human ignorance but a judgment on human pride.

Faith functions chiefly in Luther's theology not in a cognitive capacity but in a relational one.[22] Faith is the medium of the saving relationship between the human subject as believing sinner and the divine subject incarnate in Jesus Christ. Faith is saving not on account of what it knows or believes but because by faith one is united to Christ the mediator. But this itself is a faith claim. One trusts that faith is sufficient for salvation not on the basis of any empirical evidence or logical proof but on the basis of God's word of promise.

The predicament of the human subject is not reconciled by faith as a religious quality but is reconciled finally by God in Christ. Let us be clear: Luther does believe in the ultimate resolution of our sinful dilemma, but this longed-for, trusted-in closure is not naive. Faith has, for Luther, no inherent value apart from Christ as its object. Faith is of benefit to the believing sinner in "that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride with her bridegroom."[23] But the consummation of this union is yet to come. To the extent that there is a reconciliation or synthesis posited by Luther's theology, it remains an eschatological one. In this life, Christ remains for us the "constant mediator" of a reconciliation which we "can not of ourselves have or obtain."[24] Faith functions, then, not so much to create presence or to bring synthesis to Luther's negative dialectic, but faith functions rather to allow

Faith has, for Luther, no inherent value apart from Christ as its object.

the believing subject to stand within the dialectic as both saint and sinner. The immutably sinful human subject faces an inevitable death; of this there can be no doubt. God's promise of resurrection for believing sinners joined to Christ is taken on faith: "in the meantime," Luther writes, "we can only *believe* this."[25]

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[22] To make the claim that faith functions *chiefly* in a relational capacity in Luther's theology is not to say that faith does not also have a certain cognitive content. Faith, for Luther, is not separated from reason as though it were some purely emotional response. Luther assumes that one must know *about* Jesus in order to trust in him. This cognitive content of the faith, which Luther calls *fides historica*, is a necessary (although not sufficient) basis for faith as *fiducia*. Faith has both cognitive and relational capacities, for Luther; but it is in its relational capacity—uniting the believing sinner with Christ—that faith justifies.

[23] LW 31:351 [The Freedom of a Christian, 1520].

[24] LW 51:277 [Sermon on the Sum of the Christian Life, 1532].

[25] LW 33:292 [The Bondage of the Will, 1525], emphasis original to *Luther's Works*.

Lutheranism as a Counterculture? The Doctrine of Justification and Consumer Capitalism

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Even at its best—however you want to define that—North American culture believes deeply in justification by works. Whether it is Horatio Alger's belief that the boy who works hard and lives virtuously puts himself in the position to benefit from good luck (How much like the Medieval "to the one who does his very best, God will not fail to reward grace"!) or Robert Schuller's "Possibility Thinking," the theologians of our cultural religion preach that we achieve salvation—usually called "success"—through virtue and hard work, mind-power, or a winning personality.[1] Even the prophets of North America who protest against the degeneration of our culture propose solutions that reassert a character ethic of serious achievement. Whether seeking au-

[1] For surveys of the evolution and nature of the idea of success in America, see Peter Baida, *Poor Richard's Legacy: American Business Values from Benjamin Franklin to Donald Trump* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1990); Rex Burns, *Success in America: The Yeoman Dream and the Industrial Revolution* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976); Richard M. Huber, *The American Idea of Success* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971); Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers: Religion as Pop Psychology from Mary Baker Eddy to Oral Roberts*, reissue (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); Moses Rischin, ed., *The American Gospel of Success: Individualism and Beyond* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965); Richard Weiss, *The American Myth of Success: From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale* (New York: Basic Books, 1969); and Irvin G. Wyllie, *The Self-Made Man in America: The Myth of Rags to Riches* (New York: The Free Press, 1954).

thenticity or dollars, North Americans believe that they are responsible to achieve their goals through their own efforts. The contradiction of Luther's doctrine of justification could not be more absolute.

Current discussions of Lutheran identity can be quite engaging. I cannot deny that after nine years working in a major American Evangelical institution I have little sympathy for those who would have us adopt the religion of American revivalism. After ten years back in a "higher" Lutheran context, I also cannot support those who would have us adopt Medieval liturgies, hierarchical bishops, or Jesuit retreats. I can also generate no enthusiasm for becoming like mainline Protestants, so a good argument is not hard for me to find. The problem is that too many of these entertaining arguments focus on side issues which prevent us from dealing with this central issue: How to live a "doctrine of justification" way of life in the midst of a culture that opposes such a way.

The problem has little to do with liturgical style or language about religious experience. Evangelicalism is not a problem because of praise songs, but because it is thoroughly enmeshed in consumer-capitalist ideology and confuses success with the eschaton. Anglo-catholicism is not a problem because of one's personal opinion about copes and bells, but because it is based on the medieval godfather of modern achievement oriented ideology. Mainline Anglo-American Protestantism is a problem because it too contains the spiritual roots of consumer capitalism. We cannot assimilate to any of these without adopting the common ideology that gives them all life. The number one item of discussion should not revolve around "church growth," "spirituality," or "the public square," but around the question of what our way of life would look like if we really believed with all our hearts and minds that God has spoken an unconditional promise to us in Christ. This promise does not just make pursuing success North American style pointless, but reveals the ideology that supports such a quest as demonic.

"Foreign Protestants"

Given the contradiction between the basic belief of Lutheranism and the basic belief of the North American consumer culture, it seems that the only option, if we are to remain Lutheran, is to become counter-cultural. This conclusion seems inevitable, yet to say it goes against our whole North American Lutheran upbringing. In part because being Lutheran became such a problem in 1914 and again in 1939, we have not been brought up to go against the grain. Beyond our particular history in Canada and the United States, almost never in the history of Lutheranism has anyone seriously suggested that the Lutheran movement is a counter-cultural movement.

True, in North America we chose for many years to remain outside the cultural mainstream, but we made that choice not because we intended to be counter-cultural, but because we hoped to preserve the language and habits of the old country. We were immigrants, not revolutionaries. As we have come to see less and less reason to preserve the culture of our European homelands we have not set ourselves a counter-cultural agenda, but an assimilationist agenda. The question we now debate is not *whether* to assimilate, but *how* to assimilate. Our ancestors may have been "foreign Protestants," as the Lutherans were called in Nova Scotia in the eighteenth century, but we choose not to be. I want to argue that we ought to go back to the "whether to assimilate" question and build in a counter-cultural direction from our outside-the-

mainstream past.

The North American context and our history here provide Lutherans with the opportunity to recapture in a more creative way what has been at the heart of Lutheranism since the beginning. We have the chance to develop not only a theology, but also a practice of church and social life which is centered in the theology of the cross and the doctrine of justification. This requires not an assimilationist agenda, but a counter-cultural agenda.

If we recognize that the doctrine of justification as we understand it cannot ever be completely comfortable within North American society—or any society based on an ideology which requires people to achieve their own authenticity or release from guilt or whatever—we have made the crucial first step. The gospel as Lutherans understand it says that God's promise is given unconditionally in Christ; North American ideology says that the promise of the god of this society can only be realized through the luck that comes to those who work hard, think positively, and develop a winning personality. The gospel as Lutherans understand it says that "needs" are not central and will be filled anyway as Christ calls us into a life of discipleship in mission; North American ideology says that "needs" are central to your life and that they can be filled by buying a commodity. The two understandings are utterly contradictory and mutually exclusive.

These two contradictory understandings should give rise to two very different ways of life. If I believed that there is promise for my life—beyond the here and now in hope for the coming Reign of God—and that this promise is spoken to me unconditionally in the death and resurrection of Jesus, I would live quite differently than if I believed that I needed to do my very best through hard work and positive thinking to put myself in a position to gain the immediate promise of the prosperity and security shown to me on television. For example, it is unlikely that I would see other people as instruments for carrying out my own goals. Rather, I would see other people primarily as partners in hearing the promise, as partners in expectation. Therefore I would tend to see relationships not as a context for meeting my needs, but as a context for embodying the eternal hope of the gospel. Or, I would not see authenticity as a goal to be pursued but as a gift of which I am a trustee.

Unfortunately, not very many Lutherans see life in this way. Researchers at the Search Institute have recently told us that we have gone from 1970 when 60% of the Lutherans in Minneapolis understood justification by grace[2] to today when 60% of Lutherans across the United States do not understand justification by grace.[3] We are not different from any other members of our social class in the way that we live. This can only represent a failure on the part of the Lutheran churches to show people that the gospel is a real alternative to consumer-capitalist ideology. Our preaching, teaching, and practice does not reveal a new and different world to people. Our imagination

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[2] Merton P. Strommen, Milo L. Brekke, Ralph C. Underwager, and Arthur L. Johnson, *A Study of Generations: Report of a Two-Year Study of 5,000 Lutherans between the Ages of 15-65: Their Beliefs, Values, Attitudes, and Behavior* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 100-129.

[3] Peter L. Benson and Carolyn H. Elkin, *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations—A Summary Report on Faith, Loyalty, and Congregational Life* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990), p. 13 and p. 69 n. 2: 67% of mainline Protestants "evidence difficulty in accepting that salvation is a gift rather than something earned."

is blunted by our accommodation to the status quo—first in the "old country," and now in Canada and the United States.

Justification as a way of life?

If there is anything unique about Lutheranism, it is that we have defined the gospel as *unconditional* promise and have held justification *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *solus Christus* to be the heart and core of Christianity, the doctrine on which the church stands or falls.[4] One of our problems is that we have not followed up on the possibility that the doctrine of justification might set us free from the religion and ideology of our culture. In fact, through a simplistic use of the "Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms" and other devices we have specifically interpreted justification so that it does not threaten ideology. In the North American context this means that we have told ourselves that the ideology of self-reliant capitalism and the doctrine of justification can live quite nicely side-by-side. We present ourselves as no threat to the cultural and ideological status quo, because, we claim, our doctrine of justification is restricted to the spiritual realm, to the religious realm, and makes no claim on business or politics.

The problem with all this is that it flies in the face of the way a world-view animates a culture or an ideology undergirds a society. Here is where the concept of ideology and its use by social and political thinkers help. In the first place, it seems to be generally agreed by most students of the concept that ideas have social and political implications and that social, economic, and political conditions are reflected in consciousness.[5] If that is the case, then a fundamental doctrine such as justification will have implications for a person's life in society. This is especially true if we adopt something like John Thompson's definition of ideology as an imaginative linguistic construction of social relationships.[6] The doctrine of justification puts forward a view of the world in which a person's or a people's worth is dependent solely on God's unmerited favor, not on their own achievements. This creates a representation of human relationships which calls into question any domination based on perceived performance.

We have not followed up on the possibility that the doctrine of justification might set us free from the religion and ideology of our culture.

In human culture it is impossible to separate out a fundamental religious belief

[4] This is the view of Lutheranism presented by Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); Gerhard O. Forde, *Justification by Faith—A Matter of Death and Life*, Knubel-Miller-Greever Lectures, 1980 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); and Carl E. Braaten, *Justification: The Article by Which the Church Stands or Falls* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

[5] For a more detailed summary of how ideology has been understood, see Robert A. Kelly, "How Serious Are We? The Liberatory Possibilities of the Doctrine of Justification," *Consensus: A Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology* 19:2 (1993), 51-70.

[6] John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

It is impossible to separate a society's religion from the social and economic function of that religion.

from a fundamental social belief or economic belief. While cultures can and do hold beliefs which clash with one another, these contradictions are resolved on the basis of the central myth of the society. The society's religion has the task of presenting this myth so that most people can believe in what is important for social cohesion. In modern Western societies social religions have had to appear scientific rather than religious, so we now speak of ideology as fulfilling this function. Whether we call it religion or ideology, the point is the same. It is impossible to separate a society's religion from the social and economic function of that religion. That is why the prophets of Israel so often linked idolatry with the treatment of the poor, or why Jesus spoke so much about money. One cannot alter a people's fundamental understanding of their relationship with God without also altering their fundamental understanding of their relationships to one another in society. If we have left our ideology or worldview intact, then we do not really believe that we are justified by faith alone without works of law. A fundamental change in the premises of religion will either cause or reflect a fundamental change in world-view.

This means that Lutherans are forced into a choice. We cannot take refuge in the sort of "two sphere" thinking which separates our doctrine from our life in the world, because such thinking is a fool's paradise. If our fundamental teaching is that our relationship with God is based on unconditional promise and that meaning in life is given *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *solus Christus* rather than by being virtuous, working hard, thinking positively, and developing a winning personality, then we will be a threat to the status quo.

That Lutherans themselves find the doctrine of justification a bit too threatening can be seen at church gatherings across North America. Gerhard Forde relates this story:

> All one has to do to test the shock effect [of the doctrine of justification] is to try talking about that "nothing" in its "purity" even in churches of the Reformation, or writing about it in official organs of the church! Once recently I was asked to talk about justification and predestination as one finds them in Reformation doctrine. The topic provoked rather hefty and heated argument. After my talk was over a nice old gentleman came shuffling up to me and said, "You know, I can't figure it out. Why is it that when anyone talks about the sheer grace and absolute mercy of God people get so mad?"
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> Why indeed? Because it is a radical doctrine. It strikes at the root, the radix, of what we believe to be our very reason for being. The "nothing," the *sola fide*, dislodges everyone from the saddle... and shakes the whole human enterprise to the roots. It strikes at the very understanding of life which has become so ingrained in us....[7]

We say that we believe in justification *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solus Christus*, but we act as if we believe, like everyone else in North America, that the ground of authentic

[7] Forde, 22-23.

being is in performance, achievement, influence, and mind power. We need to face the possibility that the ideology/religion of our society is built on a completely different, if not fundamentally opposed, metaphor to that expressed in the Lutheran doctrine of justification.

The basic story of justification is exactly opposite from a nineteenth century success novel. The poor boy starts out with every possibility. He has a loving mother, a hard-working and pious father, and a quick mind. But it takes him until thirty to even figure out what he will do with his life. Then he becomes a wandering preacher and chooses twelve losers as followers. When he meets the good, religious people who could help him get ahead, rather than winning friends and influencing people, he tells nasty little stories that alienate them. He never achieves success. His life ends with his well-deserved arrest, trial, and execution. Then his low-brow followers come up with some impossible story to explain it all.

The story of Jesus is not the kind of story that will fuel the engines of economic growth or inspire young people to give the best years of their lives to the pursuit of income and consumer goods. It is the kind of story that might cause people to sell all that they have, give it to the poor, and begin a life where they are a drag on economic growth. If we take seriously the fact that Jesus died on a cross and that God justifies us without *any* reference to effort or achievement or performance or even positive thinking and a winning personality, then we will become the most subversive people in North America. We will be telling people exactly the opposite of what our society needs them to hear in order to survive in its present form. We will set people free from the ideological power of the consumer society.

Why have Lutherans never been able to make this move? If Luther realized that the doctrine of justification was at odds with the ideology of sixteenth century Germany, he chose to support that ideology in social life as thoroughly as he attacked it in ecclesiastical life.[8] Luther began with the *theologia crucis*, and moved from there to justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This became the core of the Lutheran movement. What Lutherans did not see—perhaps could not see—in the sixteenth century is that the doctrine of justification is the fundamental critique of social ideology just as it is the fundamental critique of religion, and so the Lutheran movement allowed itself to be institutionalized as the established religion of much of Northern Europe. The habits of establishment overcame the counter-cultural force of the doctrine of justification. In the end, not only the ideology of works, but even the religion of works was reinforced.

It may be that this move was a fundamental mistake inconsistent with Luther's central insight. We can understand why, in the conditions of the sixteenth century, Lutherans did what they did, but that does not mean we must perpetuate the problem. Today in North America, just as in Germany in 1520, the prevailing ideology says exactly the opposite from what the doctrine of justification says. Perhaps, with the possibility

[8] I suspect that the foundation for Luther's separation of the ecclesiastical and the political/economic is in Medieval views of society which were developed to cope with the fact of the power of the church as a social institution alongside other social institutions. Thus the church is seen to have its sphere of authority and the royal or municipal power its sphere of authority. Even while protesting the political power of the church, Luther takes over the basic social theory rather uncritically, though giving it his own twist. For example, the three orders of Medieval society, aristocracy, clergy, and the "third estate," becomes for Luther state, church, and home.

of establishment denied us, Lutherans can finally allow the *theologia crucis* and its doctrine of justification to be the real center of the movement.

We can see this on the private level, but even our best theologians are reluctant to take the step out of private piety into public religion. For example, even Gerhard Forde's book on justification cannot quite take what Forde has said about justification *sola fide* all the way. Forde concludes:

> Much of what I have said in these chapters may have been poorly put, or the strategy mistaken. But I have had one aim in mind—to establish the point that in the end we have to *say* it, pronounce it, do it again. The aim is to unlock, unleash once again the power of the gospel, the power of that word which does indeed judge, confront, attack, kill the old in order to give birth to the new. The art of doing that has perhaps been lost in a sea of images, options, myths, and paradigms. My hope is that we might at least think about how to regain the art of speaking the unconditional word and promise with power.[9]

The old order that the gospel attacks and kills cannot be restricted to the *personal* old order, but must also include the *public* old order. Religion and ideology are not different, but simply the "spiritual" and the "scientific" form of the same intellectual and ritual system of social cohesion. If the gospel attacks and kills religion, it also attacks and kills ideology. The reason that modern North American Lutheranism's proclamation is not causing an explosive Reformation in our own time is that people are not divided between a religious self and a secular self, each of which holds to a completely different belief system. No matter how often or how well we say "I forgive you" or "I baptize you," the power of the gospel remains locked and leashed if we intend to restrict that message to some religious or personal sphere. The problem is not with the words or the speaker; the problem is that the words are addressed to an entity that does not exist.

The gospel is not only the death of the individual ego, the personal *causa sui*,[10] and the resurrection of a new personal life in Christ, it is also the death of the corporate ego, the cultural *causa sui*, and the resurrection of hope for the Reign of God. Forde's hope will only be realized when Lutherans begin to work out the implications of justification by faith alone as an absolute "No!" to the ideology of North American society and a total "Yes!" to all of God's new way and begin to live as if we really believe both the no and the yes. Until we do no one will take us seriously, nor should they. We cannot just say to people, "I forgive you your religious sins." Rather, the word is: "You have heard it said that being on welfare shows that you are a lazy negative thinker, but I say to you that God loves the welfare recipient as much as the successful businessman. Not only that, we, the church, respect welfare recipients and honor you as leaders among the people of God and our teachers in hearing the Word." If we could bring ourselves to say that, even in our white, middle class congregations, then people could see that we take the birth of God's new order seriously. It is time that we stopped playing word games and started taking the gospel seriously as *The Gospel*.

It is as Forde says:

> If unconditional justification means the death of the sinner and new life, then the sin and guilt of which we are speaking is precisely that incurred by entrapment in

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[9] Forde, 97. Emphasis in original. Forde's argument is not poorly put, nor is his strategy mistaken.

[10] Cf. Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973).

> the legal scheme and its pretensions. The sin of which we are guilty is precisely the refusal of new life through our own attempts to remain in the saddle at all costs. In that refusal we will consciously or unconsciously marshal all our forces—both moral and immoral. Even our theology will be enlisted in the service of protection. We use the argument that all that legal talk is not relevant any more, but then in the last extremity turn about and use the law and legal talk precisely as protection against the final question over our lives. After all, we do have to do *something*, don't we?[11]

We Lutherans have for too long been afraid of our identity and opted for identification. As faithful servants of the status quo—of the old way—we finally say that, yes, you do have to do something. You do have to exclude the new creation from your life in society and your business. There *you* and your works have to remain in the saddle. There you have to marshal your forces, for there you are entrapped by the legal scheme. That is what God requires of you.

So the doctrine of justification and the theology of the cross lose all power to speak to people. How can we say that God, that Ultimate Reality, looks upon us *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *solus Christus* and then turn around and tell people, "But that doesn't count in your life in the world. Because the world is fallen, in the world you have to live by the rules that rich and powerful people make up." It doesn't wash. Either God is God or God is not God. If justification is true, it is true. Period. Otherwise our version of the doctrine of justification is nothing new at all, but just another religious cover-up for continuing the rule of the rich and powerful, a sophisticated excuse for continuing the social *causa sui*. If the doctrine of justification and the theology of the cross are really nothing new, they become pretension, servants of the old ideological master rather than the death of the old and the birth of a new way of life that imagines and hopes for the Reign of God alone—a *solus Deus* to add to the other Reformation *solas*.

We can't really avoid the problem by putting it all off until eternity arrives, until the final judgment. If the final judgment is God's final judgment, then it is an ultimate judgment of the worth of everything. If that judgment has already been made in the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth—in which both religion and ideology were equally responsible for the attempted murder of God—then religion and ideology are both equally found to fail. The last trumpet will not only put an end to our religious pretensions, but also to our ideological pretensions. In fact, it will reveal them as identical. In light of God's ultimate judgment, our ideology has already been found false in the cross. We are forced to choose. Will we follow Jesus to the cross, or will we follow the priests and the governors to glory?

The last trumpet will not only put an end to our religious pretensions, but also to our ideological pretensions. In fact, it will reveal them as identical.

[11] Forde, 84-5.

As John Kavanaugh says, Christian faith and ideology do not cooperate with one another, they oppose one another:

> Our understanding of the all-encompassing struggle between Christ and idolatry as competing *total worldviews* which claim our allegiance should qualify all of the concrete choices and particular options before us. It is our final commitment in faith which vivifies and gives meaning to the partialities of limited decisions and conditioned expressions of that commitment.[12]

Conclusion

In a recent analysis of the theology and ethics of Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas, Arne Rasmusson points out that both Moltmann and Hauerwas see "that the Christian church represents an alternative perspective of reality as well as an alternative social order."[13] This is exactly the point that I am trying to make: Lutheran theology views the fundamental nature of reality differently than North American consumer ideology. Therefore Lutheran theology implies an alternative way of life. Certainly it is not a way of life that can be lived in withdrawal from the world, but it is a way of life that will be visibly different. A Lutheran way of life would not be, for example, an Old Order Mennonite way of life, since our affirmation of the first article of the creed, the distinction of two kingdoms, and our theology of vocation all commit Lutheran theology to full engagement with the world. A Lutheran way of life would be lived both counter to consumer capitalism and also engaged in the concerns and needs of our neighbors. We would take seriously Hauerwas' contention that "The church doesn't have a social strategy, the church *is* a social strategy,"[14] and also take seriously our responsibility as human beings for the public decisions made by human societies.

But taking seriously our responsibility for public decisions means being willing to be different. As Moltmann says:

> Solidarity with others in meaningful action loses its creative character if one no longer wishes to be anything different from the others. Bonhoeffer's 'existence for others', to which so much appeal has been made, becomes meaningless if one is no longer any different from the others, but merely a hanger on. Only someone who finds the courage to be different from others can ultimately exist for 'others', for otherwise he exists only with those who are like him. And this is not much help to them.[15]

The point of counter-cultural Lutheranism is not to set up a "Christ against culture" antipathy to everything "worldly," but to live as a community of people different for the sake of the world.

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[12] John Kavanaugh, *Following Christ in a Consumer Society: The Spirituality of Cultural Resistance*, Revised edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 158.

[13] Arne Rasmusson, *The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 37.

[14] Stated in a number of places and also using "politics" in place of "social strategy." One interesting example is Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 30-48, where Hauerwas and Willimon offer a critique, borrowed from John Howard Yoder, of H. Richard Niebuhr's typology of the relation between church and culture. In their view Niebuhr's typology is set up so as to ensure a Constantinian outcome and color any sort of counter-cultural Christianity as sectarian.

[15] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press; New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 16.

If there is a malaise in contemporary North American Lutheranism, the solution cannot lie in an appropriation of Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox spirituality, in adopting Anglican orders of ministry, or in becoming neo-Charismatics. As important as the ecumenical movement and increasing Christian unity are, we need to recognize that almost no one inside the church as well as outside understands the gospel as *radically* unconditional promise in quite the same way we do. As Lutherans we need to fulfill our own potential, not adopt someone else's point of view. Part of that potential involves our commitment to Christian unity; part involves remembering that the Reformation happened because compromised unconditionality means placing conditions on the gospel.[16]

Which, I believe, is precisely why we do not see very many Lutherans living a life that looks much different from any other consumer-capitalist way of life. While we have not been too quick to compromise our principles in ecumenical dialogue, we have been more than ready to compromise the gospel in social and economic relations. "That's the kingdom of the left hand," we tell ourselves. "Properly distinguish the two kingdoms," we say, as if properly distinguishing the kingdom of the left hand means that the gospel suddenly ceases to be true when we leave the door of the church or turn from personal spiritual experience to life in the world. Either God's promise comes to us unconditionally in Christ, or it comes to us through hard work and positive thinking. There is no middle ground; it is one or the other. And it is one or the other irrespective of whether I am praying in church or sitting at my desk. My life is a unity, not a collection of separate compartments. The gospel is true in all my life or it is not true at all. The task of our churches is to begin to teach people, as bluntly as possible, what we really believe about the gospel and stop trying to protect ourselves from the consequences. From that point we can begin the conversation about how to live a Lutheran way of life that is uniquely Lutheran and also makes sense in modern North America.

> The gospel is true in all my life or it is not true at all.

The research for this article was supported by a grant from the Lutheran Life Insurance Society of Canada and by a grant from Wilfrid Laurier University which included funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

[16] Cf. Gritsch and Jenson, 42.

Worship and Spirituality: Imaginative Action, Per-forming Lives

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> Constructing feminist liturgical tradition requires two things: a feminist reconstruction of our common liturgical memory, and a feminist enlargement of our liturgical imagination.[1]
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> The imagination incarnated in action does not give us time to pause and consent. It is palpable and must be addressed.[2]

Act of memory and imagination

I can't remember now if quilting nights were Monday or Tuesday nights in the fall and winter in Branch La Have in Rural Nova Scotia over 35 years ago. I suppose it doesn't matter.[3] But those were times in which baby-sitters and early bedtimes were unheard of for kids in our house. Where my Mom went I went. On quilting nights I went off to Etta Veinot's house to play under the quilt while the women pieced together fabric for Lutheran World Relief and seminary students. I loved the conversation over my head as the women sorted out and pieced together their lives and stitched. I can still hear their laughter: Hattie's giggle, Lois' hearty cackle, Sylvia's sighs, Freida's clucking tsk tsk sounds, Arlene's rousing laughter and deep sighs, the quiet listening of my Mom and Effie, their attentiveness so still you could almost hear it. Sometimes I curled up under the quilt tent to the sounds of their voices and the crisp puncture of needles through taut fabric and drifted off.

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[1] Marjorie Procter-Smith, *In Her Own Rite: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 36.

[2] Myerhoff, "Life Not Death in Venice," in *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. Victor Turner and Edward M. Bruner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 283.

[3] Accounts of women's history in this article constitute a modest exercise of memory and imagination of women's liturgical history as called for in Procter-Smith, *In Her Own Rite*, see especially pp. 36-58. I am grateful to Susan L. Scott, Dawn Hutchings, and Barbara Frey for nourishing and sustaining conversation and encouragement in the formation of this article.

At six I was given a needle and a kitchen stool and joined the women around the frame. I learned to stitch tiny stitches with tiny fingers and I listened to them from up top.

My own formation as a person, as a Christian, was profoundly affected by those years under the quilt. I have a committed fascination and curiosity to see things from the underside. The quilts seemed equally beautiful from underneath and the pattern was clear. To this day in my academic life work I am possessed by a relentless desire to see and understand how things are pieced together in people's lives. Currently I teach worship and spirituality at a seminary which both represents the formative force of those early experiences and serves to lodge my daily inquiry at the knotty intersection of worship in the daily life of worshippers.

I want to return to childhood for a minute. Until I was about ten I didn't speak in public. The less flattering description of me was that I was the quiet surly one and my older sister was the pretty friendly one. A kinder description is that I was quiet, shy, tiny, timid. In Branch La Have, Sunday school happened when the benches were pulled out and pews became desks. When I was three years old my Mom was a teacher and I was never far from her skirts. On Sunday Etta—the woman whose house was the quilting site—was the Sunday school superintendent. I was timid of everyone—except Etta. She was tall and slender, white haired and a gentle woman. She always had a soft, kind word for me and loved me. I could tell by the way she looked at me and talked to me. And I loved her back. When I think back to my earliest image of God as the first person of the Trinity, as creator, the one most of us would call Father, it is really Etta's face that comes to mind. Etta who gave flesh and blood to that image of God in my life. There she was nurturing, caring for me so much that I could go to her, talk to her. Life in those days moved between Sundays and quilting nights. Here my earliest experience of God and relationships and convictions about what life is for were formed.[4]

So what does all this have to do with worship and spirituality? Given my own history, I can't escape thinking about the connections and interrelationships between worship and daily life. Nor can I ignore the fact that worship takes place in the lives of people. In the fall I teach worship, in the winter I teach spirituality. The rhythm of the school year pulls me back and forth shifting the emphasis on figure and ground.

Underlying my own quest for theoretical perspectives and my practice of theology is the desire to understand and account for human experience—to inform the practice of being human in rites specifically and beyond them. In relation to Christian worship the question is one of the total relational aspect of our lives (i.e. relationship to God; to community; the world past/present/future; to ourselves: soma, spirit, affect, cognition, action, ethics).

In most approaches to worship we begin with assertions about what worship is doctrinally or what it should be and declare, either as fact or imperative, worship's formative force for life in the world. Liturgical practitioners and scholars embedded in the normative prescriptive stance dispense the pronouncements of oughts—what worship ought to be and how it ought to shape our

[4] Incidentally my father describes my relationship with Etta like this. On the first day of vacation church school my mother went with me to my class and I sat on her lap. On the second day Etta got me off Mom's lap and onto a chair. On the third day I went off with Etta and didn't come back. I include this to demonstrate that history is always from a point of view and therefore necessitates multiple representations.

daily lives (form us spiritually). We often fall into a haze of forgetfulness, neglecting to inquire what our practices are already doing in people's lives. We assume liturgy is a replacement for life.

The word spirituality is new to Lutheran lips, new to our vocabulary. What do we even mean by the word? The temptation is to make the easy assumption that spirituality is the equivalent of piety or the devout life. The danger in this facile equation is that we focus only on churchly things and miss the opportunity to bring into contemplation the whole of our lives. Surely Luther's stubborn refusal to divide the world into sacred and profane can save us from these temptations. My own working definition of spirituality seeks to avoid this dichotomy and claim our common humanity.[5] Spirituality is the whole relational aspect of our lives—it includes relationship to self, others, God, planet, emotions, intellect, body.[6] To talk about connections between worship and spirituality is to bring our whole lives into the conversation. Spirituality is understood as having to do with our whole lives as bodied, spirited persons.

What is a spiritual practice? Spiritual practices are those activities which sustain, nourish and ground us in this God-given life. As we might expect—given our formation as Lutherans—worship, prayer, Bible reading, and hymn singing are spiritual practices. However, if we understand all of who we are and what we do to be spiritual, then what else should we include in spiritual practice? Let's go back to the women around the quilt in Etta's front room. They didn't call themselves a women's spirituality group. Nor would they have called what they were doing worship. "Spiritual practice" was not in their vocabulary. But what I heard from under the quilt, and later beside it, had the stuff of their lives in it. Sometimes I had the feeling they were stitching all that "stuff" into the quilts; all the praise and gratitude, petition and need, searching and lament, confusion and fatigue; all the thanksgiving and joy and pain; all those elements one might expect in a feisty and free relationship with God by a body of believers who gather to worship and who do things (spiritual practice) to nourish, ground and sustain them in God. If I were allowed to call this a sacrament, and I don't believe I am, I would call it the Sacrament of Stitching Things Together. They offered up, as they say at home, "in front of God and everybody," the ordinary stuff of their lives. It was a sorting out of their lives in community.

To the liturgical theologians who make the claim that daily life ought to somehow duplicate what happens in Sunday worship I say there are times when our worship would do well to replicate what happened on quilting nights in Etta's parlor. Worship and spirituality have to do with all of our lives—not neatly segmented parts. When one or the other worship/spiritual practice can't receive and accept all of who we are, something is wrong. We often lack practices in corporate Lutheran worship settings to receive the daily life experience of worshippers.

As I write this article I can imagine a great wall of objections. First, I am placing

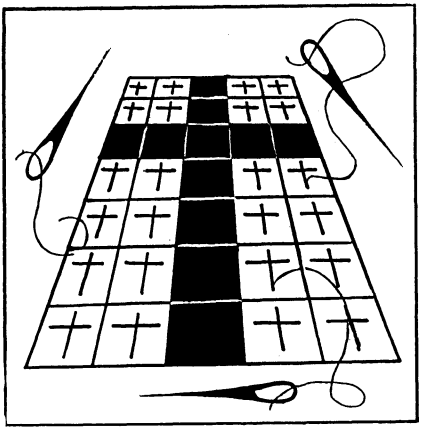
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[5] For a discussion of the Protestant rejection of the sacred/profane distinction and the affirmation of the ordinary life see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 211-47.

[6] The choice of naming spirituality as an aspect of human being is deliberate. It is intended to facilitate remembrance of our commonality with all created things. In this way it contrasts with Procter-Smith's definition of feminist spirituality as "a way of being in the world." Cf. Procter-Smith, 164f.

too many expectations on Sunday morning worship, worship can't do it all. Second, the social system that sustained the quilting group is gone, and worship alone can't replace that nexus of varied practice and relationship. Third, I cannot just place the "Sacrament of Stitching Things Together" into Lutheranism because that practice and worship have different histories, I can't pull it out of its matrix and transplant it. Fourth, the intercessory prayers already deal with peoples lives, and, after all, the eucharistic prayer is the telling of salvation history which is our real history. Fifth, it's all very well to try to account for individual experience, but individual experience is too idiosyncratic. The incorporation of such acts in worship is simple capitulation to the cultural milieu. Sixth, people are simply not interested in listening to other people stand up and tell what has happened in their lives. The final two objections are perhaps the loftiest. Lutherans, though we want to stress the event character of worship, are reluctant to admit that worship is actually something people do. Loathe to sacrifice our proclivity to assign all prerogative for acting in worship to a divine actor, we utter in the same breath our driving emphasis on incarnation and communication of God through earthly things. This is a paradoxical knot, a conundrum. What do we do with this? In exasperation I scribble on the wall: Are not our lives earthly things? Finally, the study of worship, in Lutheranism and ecumenically, has consisted of the study of liturgical texts and the history of their use as well as the study of doctrine about worship. Coupled with the assumption that one bases reform on history and tradition, is the penchant to choose an idealized, pristine era of practice. Invariably the tacit dictum informing these choices is "earlier is better."

In the recorded history and doctrine of worship, the lives and experiences of women



are absent.[7] There does exist an untold wealth of riches available in women's lives. That is what interests me, what I want to reflect upon. The absence of women's experience in formal liturgical settings compels me to consider ritual history in daily life.

Worship and spirituality are surely connected. The women who quilted came to worship *and* went to quilting piecing their lives together. Participants in worship come and go from enactment in daily life to enactment in liturgical settings. The latter is of course part of the context of their daily life. How are we to understand participants' movements in and through these spheres and spaces of action? How does the rhythm and terrain of day-to-day life form people? How does it shape their experience of rites? How does participation in rites incarnate humanity? Do Sunday gatherings orient people in a particular direction? Does their liturgical action reorder their experience? Reinforce it? Pass over it? Deaden it?

[7] Of course, the lives and experiences of less privileged men are also absent from this history. I leave the task of reclaiming this history to others.

Invariably, I raise more questions than I can explore.

I still wonder where the real worship happened for the quilters, which events they expected the most from. What difference would it have made if they had understood the quilting and the conversation as spiritual practice? Probably not much, and yet I wonder: Would they have enjoyed it more deeply if they had been able to claim it as of equal value with Sunday practice of hymn singing and verbal prayer offered in the days of the *Service Book and Hymnal* by the male pastor in the church?

Imagination and memory in action

Two years ago twelve women and I formed a group called *Women at Church* in the parish I attend.[8] We meet for two hours every three weeks. The group was born of happy coincidences. I decided I would offer my services to facilitate a life-writing[9] group for women at the same time women in the congregation expressed interest to the pastor in "some sort of women's group." Impetus for the group reflected a variety of needs: wanting a place women could get to know people better; a desire to learn about women's issues; needing a sanctuary from busy lives; realizing "something was missing" from their lives; wanting Christian "fellowship" with other women.

The pastor and I called a meeting and we invited women to say why they came and what they wanted from a group. I gave a brief talk about spirituality and making our lives the center of theological reflection, after which we negotiated an agreement on a six-month trial basis. We agreed that members would write in journals at home, read from their journals in the group, talk about their lives, and respond to one another's work. No advice or judgments would be allowed. Members could call someone to account for transgressing these protective boundaries.

Since I function as the leader, my "job" includes arriving early and making tea, setting out the table cloth and candle, announcing starting and ending times, and making certain the "rules" are observed. As women arrive, they set up the chairs and place their journals on the table. We begin by each person saying something brief about what has happened that day or in the time since our previous meeting. Then someone reads from and comments on her journal. Others may then respond with questions or other comments. Soon, a meditative rhythm emerges. We focus on a woman, release, focus on another, release, focus, and so on. The group is ritualized, though not in a formal sense.[10]

In the space of the first six months, several things happened. The women learned how to listen to one another and to respond with questions or speaking out of their own life experience without resorting

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[8] Christ Lutheran Church, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

[9] I was influenced by Myerhoff and Metzger's claim that a journal provides a space in women's lives to construct a self. It functions as "A Room of One's Own." Cf. Barbara Myerhoff and Deena Metzger, "The Journal as Activity and Genre," *Semiotica* 30 (1/2, 1980): 97-114.

[10] Cf. Ronald L. Grimes, *Ritual Criticism* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990) 13f. Following Grimes' suggestion to identify the qualities of ritual, our meetings are: performed (embodied); repetitive (not once and for all); patterned (loose structure of rules, fixed times for beginning and ending, roles); valued highly (deeply felt); dramatic ("dramas" of lives, lives are re-hearsed in the writing and the telling); paradigmatic (this is how a Christian listens to someone's life); deliberate (choice to participate, to "show and tell").

to judgment and advice. On the first Good Friday after the formation of our group (which, along with Easter, is supposed to be the ritual highlight of the Christian year), three women told me that they could hardly wait until Tuesday night when the group would meet again. Two of the women recounted that participation in the group had significantly advanced their sense of who they are in the world.

Barbara Myerhoff's consideration of *definitional ceremonies* can help us understand the action and dynamics of Women at Church. Myerhoff explores performative action as a means by which people make sense of themselves and the significance of their existence in and by imaginative acts. Her concepts arise from her study of a group of elderly Jews living in Venice, California. These elderly people, who were rendered invisible much of the time, "bore witness" to themselves and to each other by telling their life stories. The telling rendered them visible in enacted claims (not just asserted claims). The individuals re-presented and re-configured their lives in and through an imaginative act. For Myerhoff, definitional ceremonies are events in which, "when we perform ourselves we do not express what we already are: We perform our becoming and become our performing." She continues, "in ritual doing is believing; we become what we display."[11]

I believe that the sharing of journals functions in the same way as the telling of stories in definitional ceremonies. When these women "read" their journals, they are performing themselves in an act of display. They are acting their way into the future by trying on a public "fiction" of themselves on for size. Or is it merely a support group? Other than myself Women at Church do not know Myerhoff's work on definitional ceremonies. However, as time has passed, the women voluntarily identify effects of their life in the group, to each other and to me. They relate living through difficulties, confident there is a safe place they can come with an unedited version of what is transpiring in and around them. When they come to other events at the church they enjoy a quiet knowledge that there are people present to whom they are really known and who they really know. Their daily selves are tacitly present in the public arena even if no mention is made of the substance of that mutual knowledge. In this we hear the visibility made possible by definitional ceremonies.

> Ritual acts are embodied ways in which persons imagine themselves into the future.

Procter-Smith understands imagination as a way of seeing and connects it to envisioning the future. For Myerhoff imagination in relation to ritual is bodily: ritual acts are embodied ways in which persons imagine themselves into the future. Imagination is acting not seeing. In both the definitional ceremonies that Myerhoff describes and in Women at Church, vision is involved in imagination. Vision functions in two tangible ways: in acts of display persons are made visible to one another, and in the very

[11] Myerhoff, "Life Not Death in Venice," 269f. For an earlier discussion of this concept, see Barbara Myerhoff, "We Don't Wrap Herring in a Printed Page," in Moore and Myerhoff, *Secular Ritual* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977), 199-224.

act of re-presenting themselves they perform themselves into the future.

A second definitional ceremony Myerhoff observed was a parade in which the elderly people staged a procession displaying themselves as symbols to the community. Dramatizing how they wished to be seen, the elderly dressed well in order to appear as strong presences; the individuals staged themselves. In the public act, they transformed their assigned role as helpless and unseen. "What began as desire came into the world as fact" through bodily enactment.[12] Here again, doing was believing.

Acting as pretending or engaging the imagination is central to belief, not antithetical to it.

Myerhoff says the people "authored themselves" or "created themselves." They "bore witness" to themselves and one another. Each of these acts was marked by reflexivity; the elderly were aware of the discrepancies between how they really were and how they represented themselves. Still, by imaginative acts they created themselves anew. Here doing was believing, changes were negotiated. Myerhoff provides us with alternate ways to understand change in lives and how people make sense of themselves. I have focused up to now on the act of self-presentation in speaking as the act of display. However, Women at Church have identified the practice of "our rules" for listening as imaginative action, and the practice of such imaginative action has changed their way of being outside the group. By suspending judgement and advice in their reception of one another they discover themselves also embodying the style of listening with family and friends. They have acted themselves into a new future. Because they have experienced graciousness from one another, with an absence of advice and judgment, the women report gaining an enlarged confidence in God's graciousness. In acting graciously towards one another, God's graciousness takes on flesh and blood.

What does Myerhoff's work contribute to our understanding of liturgical enactment? Concepts in the Christian tradition such as, bearing witness, an act or leap of faith, etc., come to life in Myerhoff's hands. Her use of the concepts is not merely metaphoric in a disembodied sense; they name possibilities by which people may act their way into the future through imagination and display.[13] Acting has had a negative connotation in relation to liturgy, thus constituting a barrier to considering worship as performative action.[14] But acting as pretending or engaging the imagination is central to belief, not antithetical to it. Belief in

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[12] Myerhoff, "Life Not Death," 269-72. Cf. Martin's analysis of dance as performance as a political act through the body, the locus of desire. Randy Martin, *Performance as Political Act: The Embodied Self* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1990), 55ff.

[13] For a consideration of theatrical performance as a pursuit of imaginative life as physical presence in the present, see David Cole, *The Theatrical Event: A Mythos, A Vocabulary, A Perspective* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1975).

[14] For a book length consideration of worship as performance see Tom F. Driver, *The Magic of Ritual: Our Need for Liberating Rites That Transform Our Lives and Our Communities* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1991).

this sense is not trust, above, behind, or prior to ritual activity. When Myerhoff says doing is believing, she means human gestures are primary, not derivative, and that they create belief and religious expression. Ritual is noetic, a bodily way of knowing.[15]

In the end, I want to suggest that the acts that have been done around the quilt and around the table by Women At Church need to go public. The public form is testimony. Myerhoff has shown us that in the experience of the elderly Jewish community she studied, what made definitional ceremonies work was that the people became invisible in daily life and experience. The women of the quilting circle, for example, were invisible in their culture and time. These women were known by their husbands' first names, largely silent in church, and in the late 1950s and early 60s their action was constricted in daily life in the social setting. For the quilters the conversation and community sense-making activity rendered them visible to one another. Their action around the quilt was a way of surviving. At the time of the group's formation, Women at Church identified their lack of knowledge of each other and their invisibility to one another at church. Though in the 1990s they have more visibility in daily life than the quilters, it is as servants and caretakers. They have no place to be visible both within and outside the church that is free from the expectation of service to others. The group provides this space. Those Christians who because of gender, class and race have voice in the church and find their experiences reflected in its texts and traditions, have many ways to bear witness: they have access to visibility and voice. It is possible that the opportunity to give testimony could become for them an exercise in self-indulgence. Those we should be hearing from first are the women, children, poor, dispossessed, non-whites, unemployed, those who still struggle (the invisible), and perhaps if there's time, the privileged.

Testimony is a form that exists in other traditions as a definitional ceremony in which persons bear witness to one another's lives. In other Christian traditions the exercise of giving testimony is itself an act of praise and thanksgiving to God. It is typical for the testifier, in the act of telling the story of their experience, to locate and describe the presence and activity of the divine, e.g. "when this happened to me God stepped in.... God did this." Interpretation is included in the account of the experience itself as a layer of experience.[16] Lutherans, largely lacking a history of the public practice of testimony, are free to innovate. We can follow a convention and conviction central to our understanding of sacraments. Lutherans have felt free to trust the presence and activity of God in the sacraments, to name it as a mystery and yet real.[17] Likewise through testimony we can tell the story of our own experience, relieved of the need to locate the presence exactly or to assign the responsibility of specific occurrences to God, trusting that in, with, and under both the experience and the act of bearing witness, God is present. This has been the

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[15] For a full discussion of ritual as a bodily way of knowing, see Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., "On Ritual Knowledge," *The Journal of Religion* 62:2 (1992), 111-27.

[16] This description is based on participant/observation in conduct of ethnographic field study of the Kitchener Church of God (New Testament), Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. I do not mean to imply a negative judgement of the validity of this practice in other denominations.

[17] Cf. Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 70-90.

practice of Women at Church.

Lutherans have a long history of emphasis on paradox and ambiguity, which may provide a vital freedom in the content of public testimony. It can free us to speak about tangled relationships between vocation (daily life calling) and commitments or questions of faith; to speak of the absence of God; to ask searching questions; to display and explore issues of doubt.

Writings on Lutheran spirituality are sparse; they look over the shoulder to Luther to see what the implications are from his theology for the Christian life and they stay close to a description of overtly religious "churchly" activity.[18] Tacit in these efforts is the tendency to divide life into sacred/profane, church/world, holy/unholy, assimilating this world view and making it foundational in our understanding of spirituality. We have not found our own voice, our own authority, inside the tradition. If we are to embrace the ordinary life as the holy life, we require public practices in which we enact our becoming. The performance of testimony inherently values the daily round of activities and tacitly enacts the priesthood of all believers.

In my own backward glance, I see in Luther's liturgical reform a kind of tenderness in the action of his composition of hymns and setting them to popular tunes, an attentiveness to who the people are. This may be the best thing we can emulate of Luther's. Luther, however, couldn't be expected to foresee what we're facing at the end of our century. It's up to us to imagine the discussion forward in action. As Myerhoff would have it, this need for incarnate imagination is palpable and pressing to be addressed.

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[18] Examples include Frank C. Senn, "Lutheran Spirituality," in *Protestant Spiritual Traditions* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986), 9-54; Bryan V. Hillis, "Spirituality and Practice: Luther and Canadian Lutheran Spirituality," *Consensus: A Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology* 19:1 (1991) 53-76; Jay C. Rochelle, "Lutheran Spirituality: Lost, Found, Revised," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 20:5 (October 1993) 390-95.

Herod and the Travelers: an Epiphany Sermon

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Let us pray:
Star of wonder, star of light, lead our minds and hearts as you led those very wise seekers so long ago, that we too may arrive at a place of faithful understanding that is simple, and holy, and with Christ. Amen.

Epiphany. My Webster's dictionary says that it means "an appearance or manifestation of a divine being." It is, I think, more commonly understood as a synonym for "revelation" generally. In both instances, though, the perspective is a very human one. God may perform a miracle; God may produce some lovely phenomenon, but those things become epiphanies when humble human beings recognize them for what they are—God's gracious, unexpected handiwork. In these days we remember the epiphany of three (or perhaps two, or perhaps many more; Scripture only mentions that there are more than one) Gentile travelers to Bethlehem. Scholars disagree on their exact profession—they may be kings or astrologers or a dozen things in between. But what *is* definite is that they are wise.

The Feast of the Epiphany is an inquest, then, not into these gentlemen's identity but into their motive, their vision. It is certain that they were seekers, and that is the beginning of wisdom. They looked for meaning behind what is visible to the naked eye. Some very divine inspiration caused them to recognize one star as the herald of the newly born King of the Jews. Beyond their Gentile teachings, beyond their grasp of all that is tangible, these very wise men had a belief in a *beyond*. I think of some lines by George Santayana: "It is not wisdom to be only wise, and on the inward vision shut the eyes, but it is wisdom to believe the heart. Columbus found a world and had no chart save one that faith deciphered in the skies. To trust the soul's invincible surmise was all his science and his only art." These astrologers saw that star not simply as an object of their study, but as an invitation to journey, to adventure, to possible transformation. There was a message in the star; they knew it was a sign. Some modern astrologers and biblical scholars are sure that the star was Halley's Comet or Venus rising. I'd like to think that if I saw



a star that heralded the new messiah's birth—or any other message from God—I would be wise enough to stop explaining and just believe, but I'm not so sure.

What hopes must this star have awakened in these wise men? What great expectations did this star arouse to inspire courage in these non-believing believers to risk road banditry, ridicule, or disappointment as they made their gold-laden way across the desert? I think they must have had a tremendous hope that something new could happen in this tired world. Was it hope of some kind of salvation that drew them onward? "We have come to pay him homage" is all they say, but this is no run-of-the-mill social house call. Their hopes for transformation are resting with a person—a child—not with an ideology, a discipline, a political system, a brand of psychoanalysis. When we make a journey that is no simple road trip but a spiritual journey to the edge of our personal horizon, we realize that we are traveling toward ourselves, toward who we were created to be. I think the wise men discovered this on the road as well.

They arrive in Jerusalem—that makes perfect sense; they are looking for the King of the Jews—why not go to the capital, the seat of power? They speak to the current ruler, installed by Rome, but a Jew, although of Edomite descent. Herod oozes charm with them, I am sure. They are dignified, they are bearing costly tributes, but they are not for Herod. They are for his rival. Their question to him is completely well-intentioned, it is innocent, but it informs Herod of what he did not know: The messiah has been born. Herod is responsible for his own actions, but the astrologers have unwittingly tipped him off. He sends them on to Bethlehem, which his chief priests have to remind him will be the site of the messiah's birth, with instructions to find the child and report back to him his exact whereabouts. In a dream the astrologers are warned to take another route home, and when Herod learns that they have duped him he sends henchmen out to kill all little boys under the age of two in the region of Bethlehem. How many well-intentioned souls since then have unwittingly triggered the rage of butchers?

With the story of Epiphany, Herod takes center stage in our hearts' own continuing Christmas pageant, and he belongs there. A Christmastide and Epiphany without Herod is sanitized, unreal. So much about the incarnation of God in the Christ child is sweet and lovely, but we must not forget that from the moment of his birth there were many in power who wanted him dead. If Jesus incarnates God, Herod incarnates evil. These weeks of Epiphany are about joy and peace and goodwill as much as they are about the underside of human brutality, of poverty, of selfishness and abuse of power. Herod worries us still--we leave him out of our nativity scenes, retailers keep him out of department stores (can you imagine taking your children to sit on *his* lap?). But we leave him out of our Epiphany season observances at our own peril. Just as the Christ child is well-known to many

around the world, Herod is also still very present to untold numbers. He wears the military fatigues of a dictator. He sends his squads out into the Brazilian night to murder children so destitute that they have no roof over their heads. Herod sells Thai and Burmese boys and girls into prostitution to service wealthy westerners. His car bombs pick off dozens of innocents at a time. Herod is a part of Epiphany, then and now.

He was, as I've said, a Jew; his chief priests and scribes were leaders of the religious community. How curious, then, that non-Jews from far away were the ones to point out to them that in a city nearby the messiah had been born. How about all the faithful of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Judea? If some of them had noticed a curious star, they certainly didn't understand it. Epiphany is a reminder then to us all that those outside our communities may have a clearer vision and understanding of the truth we seek, which hovers over our heads. From a distance they achieve a critical perspective on our faith, on our practice, which we, through familiarity or ennui, may have lost.

Some people took immediate notice of the star, and understood its meaning. Those poor shepherds are very dear to many of us. The simplicity and depth of their adoration is lovely to consider. Yet when I am honest with myself I must admit that I have a lot more in common with those astrologers than I do with Jesus' very first admirers. Evelyn Waugh has written a prayer and placed it in the mouth of St. Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine. I resonate very deeply with her sentiments. She addresses this prayer to the wise men:

Like me, ...you were late in coming. The shepherds were here long before; even the cattle. They had joined the chorus of angels before you were on your way.... How laboriously you came, taking sights and calculating where the shepherds had run barefoot! How odd you looked on the road, attended by what outlandish liveries, laden with such preposterous gifts!

You came at length to the final stage of your pilgrimage and the great star stood still above you. What did you do? You stopped to call on King Herod. Deadly exchange of compliments in which there began that unended war of mobs and magistrates against the innocent!

Yet you came and were not turned away. You too found room before the manger. Your gifts were not needed, but they were accepted and put carefully by, for they were brought with love. In that new order of charity that had just come to life, there was room for you, too. You were not lower in the eyes of the holy family than the ox or the ass.

You are my especial patrons, ...and patrons of all late comers, of all who have a tedious journey to make to the truth, of all who are confused with knowledge and speculation, of all who through politeness make themselves partners in guilt, of all who stand in danger by reason of their talent.

Dear Cousins, pray for me; and for my poor overloaded son [Constantine]. May he, too, before the end find kneeling space in the straw. Pray for the great, lest they perish utterly. For his sake who did not reject your curious gifts, pray always for the learned, the oblique, the delicate. Let them not be quite forgotten at the Throne of God when the simple come into their kingdom.

Christ was born poor and without a home. He needed shelter and a baby blanket and they brought him gold, frankincense and myrrh! Gifts worthy of a king (which he was), but not a vulnerable, cold newborn (which he also was). And they brought the wrath of a tyrant right behind them. These

astrologers are my brothers indeed—they are polite in the face of abusive power, too well-heeled to speak the truth they may know when they at last have the opportunity. They are the learned, the oblique, the delicate—the very opposite of those shepherds. And they are late. Somehow, each Epiphany, I feel that I may have arrived a bit late. At some point the Truth of the season hits me, and as it does I have the sneaking suspicion that humbler, more faithful souls have arrived at this blessed understanding long before. "Confused with knowledge and speculation," "standing in danger by reason of their talents," Waugh's little prayer to the wise men is discomfiting indeed.

W. H. Auden has also contemplated why these men made their journey, and on what must have filled their hearts. The astrologers of his imagination proclaim:

> To discover how to be truthful now
> Is the reason I follow this star....
> We anticipate or remember but never are.
> To discover how to be living now
> Is the reason I follow this star....
> we have only the vaguest idea why
> we are what we are
> To discover how to be human now
> *Is the reason we follow this star.*

To discover how to be truthful now, to discover how to be living *now*, to discover how to be human *now*... not later. Not—late. In Epiphany we reflect on the meaning of all the events of these past weeks; in Epiphany we, like those sages, have our chance to get caught up. (Lent is less than a month away!) There is a star in the sky—even now, even for you and for me. In the phenomena around us that the supposedly wise explain away, there is the work of God, guidance in the clear cool night of whatever desert we have made our home. For those who will dare to wonder, who will permit an epiphany, there will be an astounding discovery. All power and influence in the world point not to a prince or even a tycoon but to a tiny child in a barn in a backwater town in an occupied land. Nothing is as it seems; God's future for those who will permit an epiphany makes kings into courtiers, star gazers into visionaries, and the humblest and most exploited the first inheritors of a realm unfolding before all those who have eyes to see it.

We, too, can be inappropriate, late, even silly. We may only partially understand why we journey and where we are going to. ("Now we see in a glass dimly....") Epiphany is our reminder that there will still be kneeling place in the straw whenever we do arrive. For as the magi learned, it is not who you are or when you show up, but why you come, and how. And thank God. Merry Epiphany! Amen.

Book Reviews

The Interpretation of Matthew. Edited by Graham Stanton. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995. 208 pages. Paper. $24.95.

This second edition of a very helpful book first published in 1983 contains two new things: a revised introduction by the editor bringing the reader up to date on recent developments in Matthean studies and a 1987 essay by Jack Dean Kingsbury.

Stanton himself remains in the thick of Matthean studies. So he is not reporting on events occurring on some distant front. He spelled out his own views on Matthew in a number of essays and in his book *A Gospel for a New People* (1992).

His introduction takes account of two areas of new work: literary critical and social-scientific approaches to Matthew. He assesses their contributions as he reviews the literature and adopts a cautious wait and see attitude concerning their long-term effects. Jack Kingsbury's essay is titled "The Developing Conflict between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew's Gospel: a Literary-Critical Study" (first published in *CBQ* in 1987). Stanton comments on it and uses it as a port of entry into the world of literary critical studies devoted to Matthew.

Stanton's introduction deals with several issues that occupy scholars in the field and await definitive resolution: the relation of Matthew to the law, Matthew's use of the Old Testament, and the situation of Matthew's community vis-à-vis Judaism at the end of the first century. The essays in this collection are all old classics (except for Kingsbury's). What seems most useful here is the new introduction, which serves as a map orienting readers to the rather complicated territory of Matthean studies. Along the same lines I want to recommend Donald Senior's *What Are They Saying about Matthew.* This slender, very useful volume (first edition 1983) has now experienced a second coming in an expanded and revised format (Paulist Press, 1996). Warren Carter's *What Are they Saying about the Sermon on the Mount* (Paulist, 1994) appeared in the same WATSA series.

Of course, the big commentaries by Ulrich Lutz and the team of W. D. Davies and Dale Allison are rolling along toward completion (three volumes each, when complete). They also include essays on Matthean studies and, since they are commentaries, back up their own views with analysis of individual texts. [Davies/Allison has now been published. Ed.]

In a sense these books tell us where we have been. Where are we going? Never have New Testament studies been more open, more confused and contested, more promising. Precisely because it is hard to be dogmatic about so much in regard to Matthew, the situation is very inviting for the student and the preacher.

Robert H. Smith
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

The European Reformations. By Carter Lindberg. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996. 444 pages. Paper. $22.95.

Carter Lindberg has written a book destined to become a standard text for basic understandings of the reformation period. He draws together a vast amount of material on the shape of reform in various regions, and he does so in a form that is easily accessible to the novice by carefully avoiding unnecessary insider language. He writes with characteristic wit and helps the reader see the relevance of the period under study for our own context yet without losing the distinctions between the reformers' age and our own. For those who have been swimming in the waters of reformation research for some time, he offers interesting insights into old and new themes and provides helpful tools for further research. The book begins with an interesting survey of the historiography of the reformations, a history of interpretation which continues in the writing of

this book. The book ends with a listing of research aids in this area of study and an excellent, extensive bibliography.

Two areas of concern locate this book firmly at the center of current research. First of all, Lindberg takes great pains to show that the religious change which took place in the sixteenth century was from its inception filled with a diversity of concerns, perspectives, and theological articulations. Thus the title indicates that Europe experienced reformations, not a single Reformation. Lindberg traces the various movements as they arise in Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, England, and Scotland. He includes Lutheran, Reformed, Radical, Anglican, and Roman Catholic movements. The broad scope of the study leaves few stones unturned.

The second area of concern is the bringing together of social history and intellectual history. Lindberg notes that in 1989 Steven Ozment stated: "The study of the Reformation still awaits a Moses who can lead it through the sea of contemporary polemics between social and intellectual historians and into a historiography both mindful and tolerant of all the forces that shape historical experience" (p. 20). Lindberg confronts and meets this challenge in many of his chapters where he manages to look at the relationship of social trends in connection with the major reformations. Yet when he comes to his appraisal of that reformation centered on Luther, he lapses into biography or focuses on his favorite topic of social welfare. One senses that the road has been prepared for this move by the way the author maps the general sixteenth century social context. His careful analysis of political, economic, social, and cultural factors which opens the book, ends up with all these factors being swallowed up as material elements that create and contribute to the real crisis of the era: a crisis in symbols of security. What better stage could be chosen for a Luther biography! We have waited for Moses, but what has shown up is Grimm. The reader will please excuse the pun, but this book looks a great deal in form, content, and style like an updated, expanded and revised version of Harold Grimm's classic *The Reformation Era*. To produce such a book, it should be clear, is no small feat and the results should not be minimized.

Though I do not feel this book itself brings us through the Red Sea, it may serve as midwife to help bring Moses to birth. Lindberg suggests connections between social context and evangelical themes that, while not fully developed, might prove fruitful if pursued further. The contextual contours he outlines before subsuming them under the rubric of "insecurity" are a good summary with which a future Moses might begin. Finally, the motive which creates Lindberg's reservations for going further is a good reminder for that future Moses to keep in mind: "It is an Enlightenment anachronism to assume the fundamental reasons for conflict are always political and economic" (p. 293).

Phil Ruge-Jones
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self: On Meaning, Manipulation and Promise. By Anthony C. Thiselton. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. xi and 180 pages. Paper. $24.00.

Anthony Thiselton is well known to students of theological hermeneutics through his two previous books, *The Two Horizons* (1980) and *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (1992). Like these fundamental works in hermeneutics, the breadth of scholarship in this new volume is impressive. Thiselton covers the hermeneutical insights of many past and present classical thinkers—philosophers, theologians, and literary critics—with erudition and remarkable rhetorical ease. In a clear and lucid way he analyzes the work of such diverse thinkers of the past as Hobbes, Luther, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Marx, and others. Among the discussed thinkers of this century are Freud, Heidegger, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Bultmann, Tillich, Wittgenstein, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault, Derrida, Rorty, Lacan, and Lyotard. The author focuses the analysis by considering the implications of their work for the development of *the hermeneutics of selfhood*. The book provides both an excellent analysis of modernity and discussion of the

development and characteristics of the so-called postmodernity. With regard to the latter, Thiselton offers a clear and helpful interpretation of this phenomenon which many thinkers still continue to struggle to define. Particular emphasis is laid upon the postmodern ideology-critique which unmasks the motives of power and manipulation disguised in almost every discourse.

As the title indicates, the book deals not only with understanding and interpreting the postmodern self but also God. Unfortunately, there is only one representative postmodern deconstructionist theologian analyzed at all thoroughly, namely Don Cupitt, the "father" of "the Sea of Faith Network" in England. Cupitt initiated this movement, which developed the modern notions of Kant and Feuerbach about God as an imaginative construct used for the well-being and ethical growth of the human self. However, later he diverged from it. Cupitt has increasingly adopted the postmodern deconstructionist notions in which the permanent self is considered as lost in an endless splay of intertextuality and, finally, erased entirely. It is understandable that discussion about this particular British theologian occupies one of the four parts of the book, since the author himself is English, and wants to contribute to a notorious theological debate of his country. However, the book would have been more helpful and able to address the wider audience if the author had examined some continental as well as American postmodern deconstructionist interpreters of God and self.

Finally, Thiselton offers his own constructive statements, drawing upon such traditional and contemporary Christian sources as the biblical tradition of the author of Hebrews, the Reformation tradition of the theology of the cross, Moltmann's theology of hope, and Pannenberg's futuristic theology of promise. The author is convinced that they can provide the source of meaning, promise, and hope for the anxious, uncertain, manipulated, and deconstructed postmodern self. Although Thiselton's proposal contains nothing extraordinary or even original, his project can be an illuminating and helpful example of how to face the postmodern condition from a Christian point of view without giving up its truth-claims. Hence, the book is strongly recommended, not only to students of hermeneutics, but also to lay persons, pastors, and anyone who is willing neither to surrender to, nor ignore the postmodern situation, but prefers to address it critically on its own terms and find one's own stance towards it.

Normunds Titans
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God—Mystery—Diversity. By Gordon D. Kaufman. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996. xii and 233 pages. Paper. $17.00.

This volume contains an Introduction and thirteen chapters, all but one (chapter 11) of which had been previously published either in ecumenical theological journals or multi-authored works, in India, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The book is divided into four parts: Part One: Christian Theology and Religious Pluralism; Part Two: Rethinking Some Central Christian Themes; Part Three: Reflections in Dialogue with Buddhists; Part Four: Religious Truth as Pluralistic. The dates of publication span two decades, beginning in 1976. Given such a wide time span, Kaufman's work under review reads somewhat like a description of "How my mind has changed or remained the same!" Each of the essays and/or lectures has been revised, sometimes "drastically" for this volume.

In his thoroughgoing historicist approach to which we have become accustomed, Kaufman, rejecting any theological approach which is apologetic in thrust as outdated and inadequate, offers here a perspective which is premised on the implicit assumption that the political experiment called the United States of America is the dominant paradigm, if not the norm, for the future. Our world is one of relentless, close interaction of people of diverse religions and cultures. It is in contemporary United States, not India or China, where this phenomenon of religious and cultural interaction is occurring at such a fast pace and on such an increasing scale. Religious pluralism is best exemplified in the U.S.A. With that in mind, the pressing, inevitable question which presents itself, primarily

though not exclusively, to the Christian is: How might I be Christian (or Hindu, or Muslim, or Buddhist...) without ahistorical, abstract, imperialistic absolutes? For example, how can one be Christian and not insist that Jesus Christ is the decisive and definitive revelation of God? In *God—Mystery—Diversity*, Kaufman sets about to retrieve and reconstruct the core of Christian faith without making claims of finality.

Kaufman's summary description of the basic task of Christian theology is instructive. He writes: "Christian theology is a discipline in which attempts are made to grasp and to understand and to set forth a picture of the world and of human life that has *God* as its focal center, and which seeks, thus, to see and understand all else in relation to God and God's activity. The vocation of theology, thus, like reflection in other religious traditions, seeks to serve the human need to find orientation in the world and in life" (6). In the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions, Kaufman explains, by "God" is meant that—whatever it might be—which holds together in a significant unity all of this multiplicity and richness of experience and reality; God is that from which it all ultimately came and to which it all must go. "It is the special vocation of theology, working with its great symbol 'God,' to specify what this can mean for our times, our lives, our problems today. That is, it is theology's task to consider how 'God' is to be understood today, and what it is to understand ourselves as 'under God'" (7).

In Kaufman's theological scheme, "God" is necessary to humans being human only insofar as God contributes to their humanization—"there is a tremendous push toward both modernization and humanization throughout the world today" (31). With the criterion of humanization as central to his enterprise, his argument ends up leaving the reader wondering whether God has an independent existence outside of human need. If God did not exist, then we would need to invent God, since human beings cannot be human without God. Kaufman is keenly aware that this thesis on humanization might be seen as another Western imperial imposition. Yet, his thesis is premised upon a positive reading of the increasing globalization of Western values, institutions, etc., which, despite instances of uncivilized, demonic (holocaust!), inhuman behavior, violence, and exploitation, remain intrinsically good. Kaufman's argument points clearly in the direction: "God" is an existential necessity and an historical inevitability.

Kaufman builds his argument on the assumption that "Christ should not displace God in the order of theological thinking and valuing.... There can be Christ-idolatries, Christolatries and Jesusolatries, as well as other sorts. Our thinking about Christ, if it is to be properly *theo*logical, must subserve our thinking about God—or it will itself become one more perverse and idolatrous human intellectual activity. Theology is first and foremost 'thinking about God,' not 'thinking about Christ'" (11). It is clear that for Kaufman "God" stands behind all divine "manifestations." In his contemporary apophatic theological modalism, *finitum non capax infiniti*.

The writer offers his own "absolute," however *modestly* he may desire to do so, in which the traditional Christian absolutes, especially in the area of Christology, are no longer plausible and humanizing, given their violent and inglorious history. What is needed are new ways of being which provide the religious and ideological foundations/underpinnings for the best in the ideal of the U. S. American experiment—one nation *of incredible diversity* under God. Given the sinful history of U. S. American neo-colonialism and imperialism (and it has not ended!), one would have expected attention—significant and sustained, at that!—to be given to how just such an idealized vision as Kaufman articulates and promotes has been responsible for non-Indian racism, and cultural, economic and political exploitation and domination. Concomitantly, Kaufman, who in his historical conditionedness is obviously not Indian but clearly Western, needs to give appropriate place to the positive contributions of traditional Christianity and Christologies, received through their sinful adherents, to both making the idealized U. S. American versions of the reign of God concrete and real.

As a serious attempt to grapple with the question of religious truth in general in a world of increasing relativism, I would commend Kaufman's work. Despite the fact that each

chapter in his book could stand on its own (this is actually a strength), there is a commendable consistency in Kaufman's argument that truth cannot be reduced to one reality (as he notes John Cobb, Jr., argues), but is irreducibly plural. The question remains open whether such a premise and conclusion conduce to greater humanization in our pluralistic world of the United States of America.

Winston D. Persaud
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Joseph Fletcher: Memoirs of an Ex-Radical. Edited by Kenneth Vaux. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993. viii and 104 pages. Paper. $9.99.

This short work explores the legacy of Joseph Fletcher's "situation ethics," a school at its height in the 1960s, but which still continues to influence ethical thinking today. This book contains a candid memoir, extracted from Fletcher's diary. It chronicles both Fletcher's early interest in developing a compatibility between Socialism and Christianity, and his later position as an "alienated or unbelieving theologian" (86). In that latter stance, he believed that he could not honestly take part in chapel services at his theological institution.

In addition to a bibliography, this book contains three essays by other writers that develop aspects of Fletcher's thought. Kenneth Vaux explores the complementarity of humanism and theism in Fletcher's ethics; Albert Jonsen analyzes the relationship between casuistry, situationism, and laxism in Fletcher's thought; and Mary Faith Marshall explores how Fletcher's thought conjoins the concerns of pragmatism and utilitarianism. The goal of this book is to retrieve Fletcher's situationism for contemporary ethical needs.

For Fletcher, one's life context gives shape to the good. Hence, neither predetermined principles nor undetermined license adequately account for the ethical life. Fletcher's commentators believe that his work is especially helpful for ambiguous situations that arise from new developments in medical ethics. Fletcher's concern, above all, was to affirm the value of the human individual in his or her moral deliberation. Fletcher claimed that the principle of agape-love, in which one seeks to do the most loving thing in a given situation, is one that is sensitive to human needs, and yet does not succumb to relativism.

The problem that I have with Fletcher's thought is his chronic tendency to conceive of God as somehow a threat to human autonomy and fulfillment. God does not have to be conceived of heteronomously when God is conceived of as the "crucified God." I believe that Fletcher's movement away from the Christian faith is based on a trivialization of faith. If Fletcher had delved deeper into faith, he would have found resources within faith to affirm humanity against social oppression and legalism.

This book will be helpful for university, college, or seminary courses in religious ethics. Clergy might find this book appealing as a way to help them sharpen their skills in ethical thinking. Fletcher's work, as few others, presents the values of the 1960s, a decade that sought to wrestle with secularism and the value of the individual.

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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" (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 Cousar'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 faithfulness 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 response 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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Models for Interpretation of Scripture. By John Goldingay. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995. x and 328 pages. Paper. $20.00.

This is the second book by Goldingay using the organizing theme of "models." He says that four models emerge from Scripture itself. They are: witnessing tradition (a way of looking at Scripture's narrative); authoritative canon (a model that applies most directly to Scripture's commands in *Torah* and elsewhere); inspired word (a term especially connected with prophecy); and last, experienced revelation (involving material such as psalms, apocalypses, and wisdom books and letters.).

His first focus is commenting on passages in both the "First" and "Second" Testaments, his terms for the two parts of the canonical scriptures. Both Jewish and Christian writings are indexed, making the book a reference tool for the working pastor.

A second dimension: while he is an Anglican himself, primarily at work in Nottingham, he draws on material from many classical and contemporary theologians, seen as participants in the ongoing interpretation of Scripture. He footnotes their writings and amplifies their citations in a thirty page bibliography. His favorite

authors are Barth, Ricoeur, and Anthony Thiselton. But they are merely three among many who contribute to the discussions. He knows and uses Lutheran sources, but he does not operate within a Lutheran theological framework.

The third dimension is inclusion of suggestions on method and content for preaching. These insights appear at many points in the book and are more numerous in the latter part.

Finally, there are many instances of affirmation of faith. For example, "It is through the Spirit's ongoing shaping of individual and community to the likeness of Christ that both become capable of reading scripture..." (262). Pastors will find many comments that stimulate their own reflection on the Scriptures and enrich their preaching and teaching, while his models may suggest approaches to our own day.

Goldingay is primarily an Old Testament scholar. He has lectured to Baptists in Fort Worth and also at the Evangelical House of Studies, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. He has published a commentary on Daniel and has been at work on Isaiah 40-66 for the International Critical Commentary. The serious illness of his wife led him to a deeper understanding of the Psalms, a personal experience reflected in these pages.

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A Sense of the Divine: The Natural Environment from a Theocentric Perspective. By James Gustafson. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1994. xix and 176 pages. Cloth. $15.95.

In this work, James Gustafson, leading religious ethicist at Emory University, brings his theocentric perspective in ethics to bear on contemporary concerns with the environment. From his theocentric perspective, Gustafson claims that God is the ultimate orderer of the interdependence of all forms of life with each other. However, for Gustafson, there is no "clear overriding telos" which "unambiguously orders the priorities of nature and human participation in it so that one has a perfect moral justification for all human interventions" (72).

In this work, Gustafson (1) shows how nature images God's power; (2) appeals to H. Richard Niebuhr's "relational" value theory (p. 63) and the ambiguities that result for humans from this theory, such as humans' need for a job versus the well-being of nature; and (3) develops a typology of proposed ethical relations to nature. His typology analyzes five human attitudes toward nature: "Despotism," "Dominion," "Stewardship," "Subordination of Humans to Nature" (following Eastern religions), and "Participation in Nature" (the interdependence of all life in nature). For Gustafson, we are responsible for the natural environment, but "the ultimate destiny of all that exists is beyond human control" (149). With regard to nature, Gustafson, echoing H. Richard Niebuhr, offers this imperative: "Act so that you consider all things never *only* as a means to your ends, or even to collective human ends" (106).

My problem with Gustafson's ethics is its stance with regard to the Christian faith. Is Gustafson's a *Christian* ethics of the environment? He formulates his theocentric position apart from the ethical impact of the narrative of Jesus Christ. If Jesus is raised from the dead, there *is* a telos to world history (contra Gustafson). Furthermore, Gustafson's theocentrism helps us encounter the "hidden God" (*deus absconditus*) in nature, but fails to account for the "revealed God" (*deus revelatus*, God as hidden in the life of Jesus). Gustafson fails to affirm that discipleship to the crucified suggests an ethic of harmony with nature, and not its abuse (consider St. Francis).

This book sparkles with the thoughtfulness, elegance, and charm that Gustafson's students and colleagues know him for. This is an important and critical work with regard to environmental ethics.

Mark Mattes

Narrative and the Natural Law: An Interpretation of Thomistic Ethics. By Pamela M. Hall. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994. 155 pages. Cloth. $30.00.

"Law and Gospel" arguably represents the key-theme of Luther's theology. Ever since the Reformation, Lutheran theologians have argued about the right distinction between law and gospel. In addition, the question whether there is a "third use of the law" has caused heated debates between Lutherans and Calvinists. Barth's polemical anti-Lutheran formula "Gospel and Law" re-kindled this debate in the first half of this century.

Lutherans and Calvinists always were in full agreement in the *prima facie* rejection of the "medieval" way of relating law and gospel. There was never any serious internal argument in this direction. But roughly since the middle of this century two significant facts have changed the situation. For one, Roman Catholic moral theologians and philosophers have recovered the original teachings of Thomas Aquinas underneath a whole range of problematic interpretations of his theology. In addition, theologians and ethicists in the Reformation tradition—both in Europe and the U. S.—have started to rediscover the theology and philosophy of Thomas Aquinas as part of the heritage of a once undivided Western church—a heritage which is distorted if exclusively read through the lenses of Reformation and post-Reformation polemics.

Pamela Hall's very succinct, accessible, and thoughtful re-reading of Thomas Aquinas' theology of the law serves to bring both movements closer together. In a very convincing way Hall shows how Aquinas' concept of natural law depends on his full theological vision, in which the eternal law, the Old Law, the New Law, and the virtues each play a crucial part. In isolation from these other elements, which are ultimately all governed by God's salvific economy (i.e., the gift of God's grace embodied in charity towards God and all of God's creatures), Aquinas' concept of the natural law can only be misunderstood.

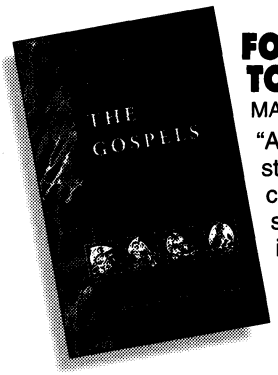
The central argument of Hall's reading of Aquinas depends on her emphasis that the natural law is something which is partially, if not almost completely, forgotten by humanity, and which we are in need of re-discovering, re-learning, and re-membering. In other words, the natural law is not something simply at hand, something which we are in full command of *qua* rational creatures. Rather, since the Fall and due to our concupiscence (the unruliness of our passions), humanity increasingly has forgotten the natural law, i.e., our directedness towards our own and the common good. Therefore re-discovering and re-learning the natural law presupposes God's prior salvific intervention: "The grace of Christ raises men and women to participation in the life of God, who is their ultimate end. By raising men and women to such participation, the New Law accomplishes what the natural law intends—although through a glass darkly—and what the Old Law foreshadowed" (72). An additional strong emphasis in Hall's reading is the seriousness with which she takes Aquinas' complex account of the Old Law, God's concrete and communal training of one particular community in the re-learning and the re-discovering of the natural law!

Her book shows Aquinas to be first of all a student of St. Paul and St. Augustine, a theologian of Scripture, and, only in this prior framework, also an ingenious interpreter of Aristotle's ethics. In addition, her reading of Aquinas can show that his theology is far removed from those late-medieval scholastics against whom Luther rightly reacted so vehemently. Of course, Hall's reading doesn't turn Aquinas into a "Lutheran" at all. But it does provide a very fruitful meeting ground for a genuine ecumenical encounter between one of the most influential and thoughtful theologians of the common Western tradition and the Reformation tradition regarding the central theme of "Law and Gospel."

The book is to be highly recommended to all college students, seminary students, and pastors who wish to read an accessible and highly reliable introduction into Aquinas' theology of law.

Reinhard Hütter
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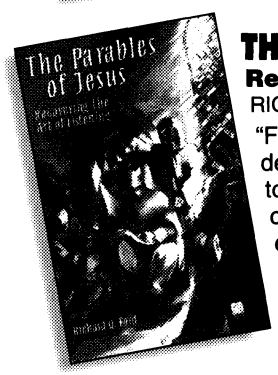


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The Human Condition: Anthropology in the Teachings of Jesus, Paul, and John. By Udo Schnelle. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996. ix and 173 pages. Paper. $20.00

"New Testament anthropology examines the foundation, enablement, structure, and realization of human existence as they are presented in the New Testament" (p. 1). Schnelle bases this examination mainly on Bultmann's anthropological insights, but frequently asserts their inadequacies. Schnelle's understanding of human essence is based on God's action in Christ, on faith, and is seen in connection with Christology, soteriology, and ethics. He includes frequent references to creation, sin, salvation, and other theological subjects.

Jesus emphasizes the creatureliness of humans which should lead to obedience to the original will of the Creator (not to the Jewish law). Schnelle distinguishes authentic and inauthentic Jesus materials in his analysis of the antitheses in the Sermon on the Mount, of the parables, and of the Beatitudes. Humans are sinners who are forgiven by God unconditionally which should lead to repentance. Jesus' teachings imply a Christology. Therefore, *after* Jesus one speaks appropriately *of* Jesus.

The starting point for Paul's anthropology is God's new reality in Jesus Christ, but actually also the reflection on human death. The Spirit transforms human existence, giving it freedom from sin. Most of the anthropological terms (heart, soul, body) mean the whole person.

For John, the starting point is the divine incarnation in Jesus Christ. The pre-existent, the incarnate One is identical with the crucified and exalted One. Schnelle discusses predestination, dualism of decision, present eschatology (without giving up future eschatology), the Paraclete, and sin (forgivable and unforgivable).

This monograph is more than an anthropology; by its breadth it becomes a mini-theology of the New Testament. The excellent translation by O. C. Dean, Jr., makes you forget that the original was in German.

Wilhelm C. Linss
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The Crucifixion of Jesus: History, Myth, Faith. By Gerard S. Sloyan. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. x and 228 pages. Paper. $16.00.

In his wide-ranging study, Gerard Sloyan tackles four topics: the biblical data about and understanding of crucifixion; the identification of the Jews as responsible for the death of Jesus; the development through the centuries of different understandings of crucifixion; and the rise and spread of Christian "pieties of pain" that have centered on and frequently imitate the physical sufferings of Jesus.

Sloyan thinks the Gospel writers had only a general remembrance of Jesus' crucifixion. That remembrance was quickly mythicized—which makes it strange that we hear nothing of Crossan or Mack. The later church understood the accounts as literal, which helped lead by the third century to the view that "Jesus had been put to death by the same Jews who had proved so hard-hearted throughout the biblical period and who would not accept him as their Messiah even to this day" (214). Sloyan traces the suffering that resulted, but he omits the last several centuries.

Sloyan finds in temple sacrifice the primary context for understanding the New Testament's view of Jesus' death as expiation for sins; he also details various subsequent theories. Most intriguing is his history of popular passion piety. In an insightful challenge, he relates the redemptive piety of the Reformers to medieval passion piety. A look at the use by television evangelists of Jesus' sufferings and at Hamerton-Kelly's study of violence, imitation, and the cross might have been instructive. For Sloyan himself, the obedience of Jesus is the key; the specific tortures are incidental.

I think Sloyan tries to do too much. A reader lacking strong background in church history will soon be lost, especially since Sloyan jumps back and forth from century to century and from topic to topic. He has gathered much helpful data, and he asks important questions. Even if the study does not do everything it sets out to do, it is a fine source to be mined.

Walter F. Taylor, Jr.

Christopraxis: A Theology of Action. By Edmund Arens. Fortress Press, 1995. 184 pages. $19.00.

As it states on the back of the book, "*Christopraxis* is a signal achievement." Throughout this book, Edmund Arens deepens and elucidates the term "praxis" and its application for Christianity. Praxis can become one of those words that everyone uses but about which few have a very good grasp. Arens' first words, "Truth is to be *done* and can be done" place the reader within an understanding of praxis. He ends his first sentence by quoting John 3:21 as a foundation of a theology of action, "But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God." Later, Arens devotes almost half of his text to a thorough biblical exposition of "doing the truth."

Arens explores the nature of the gospel as possessing a double structure of communicative action. First, the gospel is a message that is inextricably linked to the messenger. It is this linkage that allows others to freely share in it as good news, as transformational for the addressees. Jesus proclaims and also lives God's good news. One discovers the summation of Jesus' life of communicative action in the last supper, "In this meal Jesus summarized his life and action... in the moment of greatest danger to his life he underlines his confidence that he will take part with his disciples in the table of fellowship of the coming rule of God" (85). Second, as Jesus proclaims and lives according to the rule of God in his life and death, his disciples who bear witness to him make the praxis of Jesus accessible. This witnessing to Jesus' gospel is Christopraxis or "praxis of the *basileia*" which "transforms that praxis with regard to the power of the risen Christ in a manner that is both christological and christopractical" (90). So, one cannot fully understand the gospel either from an historiographic perspective or merely as a kerygmatic meaning-giving narrative. Rather, for the gospel to be the gospel, it is best understood within a double structure, both propositional and performative.

Arens continues in the last section of *Christopraxis* to base his theology in biblical foundations. His discussion of "systematic-practical perspectives" is not mere philosophy by any measure. He begins this section by discussing biblical understandings of "truth." A theology of action is more closely associated with a relational understanding of truth found within the Hebrew tradition (*emeth*) over against the Greek (*aletheia*). However, the Johannine witness combines elements of both Hebrew and Greek understandings within the Spirit of truth. The Spirit of truth proceeds from God, enters into the disciples, and bears witness to Jesus. The multiplicity of the biblical understandings of truth can point to a Christopraxis that is both orthodoxy and orthopraxis. "Jesus is the *autoaletheia*, the discerning, critical, uncovering, and unity-creating truth in person" (115). This section ends with some very helpful distinctions between types of confessions and witnesses of the community of faith. Obviously this line of communicative action reasoning will in the years ahead have much to contribute concerning the church's integrity and solidarity.

The philosophy of Jürgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel give ways to think about a social and emancipatory truth by combining correspondence, coherence, evidence and consensus theories of truth that are usually understood as irreconcilable. To this end one may want to read the first chapter of *Christopraxis* last, or even reread this chapter afterwards. This type of philosophy reflects upon the ways humans interact and the necessary conditions for free exchange. We learn to redeem claims to truth intersubjectively, by allowing free questioning from all concerned parties and working toward eventual consensus building. Arens recognizes that there is an eschatological aspect to discourse that performatively points to an ideal communication community where communicative action can be completely free from manipulation or coercion.

Overall, I recommend this book to any pastor or student interested in the social or practical side of Christianity. I highly recommend this book if you are especially interested in the biblical and theological foundations for a social and emancipatory Christianity.

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Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching. Edited by William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995. 540 pages. Cloth. $39.00.

My reading habits have not yet included reading an encyclopedia from cover to cover. This would seem to violate the very intent of a volume titled "encyclopedia." It has been my habit, though, from time to time to "dip into" a volume to find articles which satisfy immediate needs or curiosities. The *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching* is not a book which I would recommend to be read from cover to cover. In fact the editors suggest that rather than the alphabet, a systematic reading of the volume could follow several tracks of interest which are helpfully detailed in the Preface.

Taking this suggestion seriously, I invested the time to read through the articles in four of these organized tracks: Theology, History, Rhetoric, and Homiletics. Within each track, the articles are well organized. Key words identifying other articles are marked with an asterisk for the reader's convenience.

The articles under the track of Rhetoric were my favorite. I reacquainted myself with the concepts of classical rhetoric, theories of language and particular forms of preaching. The article on "Rhetoric" offers a concise refresher course on the classical techniques of preaching. "Imagination" calls the preacher to utilize the fullest scope of human language and experience in preaching. "Theories of Language" reminds the reader that language use and authority extends beyond the concern for inclusive language. The preacher has a responsibility to use words that will disclose the hidden world of the text.

The *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching* does have its weaker moments, as any work of this magnitude would demonstrate. Within the track on history, the biographical information about historical groups overshadows their significance and contribution to preaching in several of the articles. Additionally, the article on "Authority" is very brief. Finally, while Karl Barth seems to have greatly influenced the authors of several articles including the "Word of God," I would wonder if he holds such importance for the majority of preachers. Reference to other theologian-preachers such as Tillich and Bonhoeffer are less evident within the texts.

Keeping the magnitude of this work in mind, the weaknesses fade into the background. The *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching* can become a frequently used resource in the pastoral library. The articles on "Narrative," "Homily," and "Inductive" preaching can provide a template with which to evaluate one's own preaching as well as offer paradigms for new styles. Other articles can provide the basis for congregational groups who work with the pastor to evaluate his or her preaching. With all the popular how-to sermon books on the market, this work offers not answers to preaching dilemmas but the grounding for preaching within the history and tradition of the people of God.

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Resurrection and Discipleship. Interpretive Models, Biblical Reflections, Theological Consequences. By Thorwald Lorenzen. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995. x and 358 pages. Paper. $22.00.

Lorenzen, formerly professor of biblical studies at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, here offers a comprehensive response to various questions surrounding the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He does so within the framework of contemporary theology and the context of the modern world. In *Resurrection and Discipleship*, Lorenzen gives priority to the primary sources in order "to understand the resurrection, as far as it is possible, on its own terms." At the same time, the author provides a fair representation of a broad spectrum of theological opinion, although it is obvious that his thinking is influenced extensively by the works of Moltmann and Pannenberg.

The volume opens with a summary of four models of thought about the resurrection, including representative theologians. Lorenzen has categorized these models as the "traditional," the "liberal," the "evangelical," and the "liberation" approaches. This provides a backdrop for presenting the second part of the book in which

Lorenzen turns to the texts of the New Testament and how the resurrection of the crucified Christ is the "foundational event" of the church. The consequences of faith in the risen Christ for contemporary Christian discipleship are examined in the third part of the book. In the fourth and final section, Lorenzen extrapolates from the resurrection, understandings of God, salvation and liberation, and the mission of the church.

Throughout this work, Lorenzen emphasizes that the New Testament texts do not allow us to view the resurrection as an isolated event which is crystallized in history. Nor can the resurrection simply be observed and described, but as the author plainly states, "The resurrection of the crucified Christ is not properly guarded by an existential decision or a rational construct, but by a credible life of following Jesus" (220). Lorenzen maintains throughout this work that the resurrection creates a new reality, part of which is the church, the community through which Christ encounters the world as savior and liberator. The question for disciples of every age is whether or not it is the crucified and risen Christ who is being revealed in the church's life. Lorenzen concludes, "The reality of resurrection faith draws believers and the believing community into God's saving and liberating passion for the world" (232). Lorenzen seems convinced that, in our day, to be drawn into God's saving and liberating passion means working for justice and caring for the cosmos.

I recommend *Resurrection and Discipleship* to anyone who is genuinely interested in grappling with the perennial doubts and questions surrounding the resurrection. Lorenzen's exploration of the biblical texts (Part II) is the most cogent section of the book and would seem to be most useful for the teaching ministries of the church. The analysis of the nature and consequences of faith in the resurrection of the crucified Christ (Parts III and IV) is less convincing but could be beneficial for preaching and exhortation.

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The Splendor of Accuracy: An Examination of the Assertions Made by *Veritatis Splendor*. Edited by Joseph A. Selling and Jan Jans. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. 182 pages. Paper. $12.99.

Since its promulgation in 1993, the papal encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* has received widespread, intense, and controversial attention in the general public, in the Roman Catholic communion, and, to a remarkable degree, even in various Protestant churches. *Veritatis Splendor* offers a comprehensive vision of both the Christian moral life and moral life in general. It challenges various contemporary trends in society and is, at the same time, a serious and concrete intervention in the discourse of Roman Catholic moral theologians. While it is a highly important document, meriting serious consideration from Roman Catholics and from non-Roman Catholics as well, it also is a highly complex document, needing to be read from many perspectives and on various levels.

As the subtitle indicates, *The Splendor of Accuracy* takes an overall critical approach to the encyclical. It is a collection of six essays, written by five Roman Catholic moral theologians and one Old Testament scholar who teach in Belgium, the Netherlands, England, and Rome. In addition, the volume offers a helpful index of persons, documents, and scriptural passages referred to in the encyclical.

With the exception of the contribution of the biblical scholar, the essays focus on aspects of the second, most technical and dense, part of the encyclical. They are exclusively written by moral theologians whose approaches (proportionalism, consequentialism) have been strongly criticized by the encyclical. Thus, for those who are looking not for an apologetic or explanatory, but for a *critical* commentary on the more complex issues raised in the core of the encyclical, this is a very useful collection. While the authors do not hide their critical distance from what they regard as the encyclical's misrepresentation of their approaches, they are remarkably fair and—with few exceptions—refrain from counter-polemics. Instead, one can find an informative background-narrative on the genealogy of the encyclical—especially helpful for non Roman

Catholics. Also there are important clarifications regarding central claims of the encyclical, especially regarding notoriously complex concepts like "intrinsically evil acts" or the "object" of an act. Regarding the latter, Louis Lanssen's contribution "Teleology and Proportionality" is worth the price of the whole book.

For those who want to listen to "the other side" of *Veritatis Splendor* and experience some of the lively discourse of Roman Catholic moral theology, this is the right companion to the text of the encyclical. But read it after encountering the encyclical itself!

Reinhard Hütter

Bis zur letzten Konsequenz. Die Lebensgeschichte des Camilo Torres. By Renate Wind. Weinheim/Basal: Beltz & Gelberg, 1994. 114 pages. DM16.80.

Renate Wind, award-winning biographer of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (*Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Spoke in the Wheel*, Eerdmans, 1992) has chosen as her second subject the Colombian priest become guerrilla fighter, Camilo Torres. Surprisingly, few biographies have been written or translated into English about this engaging and controversial figure and none since 1975. (One of the most insightful, by German Guzman who was a contemporary and ally of Camilo Torres, was published in 1969).

Wind tells the life story of Torres as a process of ongoing conversion. Born in 1929 to a prominent family in Bogota, Camilo grew up knowing the privileges of upper class existence. His father was a pediatrician and academician of stature; his mother a one-time widow made wealthy after the death of her first husband and sometime hotel owner. He was baptized and raised Catholic more as a matter of culture than conviction or participation. Privileged to travel with his family to reside in Europe and always sent to private schools, one could scarcely predict the course Torres' life would follow.

Camilo Torres' conversion began with a turn to Christianity at the age of 19 when he became deeply impressed by the witness of French Dominicans. His family had been typically anti-clerical. So when Camilo not only demonstrated commitment to Catholicism but announced his intention to enter the Dominican order, this marked a dramatic shift in orientation. At the heart of what attracted him to the Christian faith was its deep religious conviction expressed as love of neighbor. His vivid sense of loving the neighbor as the essence of Christianity only became more radical as the years unfolded.

The conversion of Camilo Torres continued with his ordination to the priesthood in 1954. Because of his interest in social questions and the church's growing desire to engage the world by addressing social issues, Torres was directed to begin studying sociology at the Catholic University at Louvain, Belgium. His studies introduced him to methods of social analysis which continued his conversion process, especially as those methods were applied to examining the question of why people are poor. Even more, he was influenced by an encounter with the lifestyle of worker priests who brought Christian values to interface with urgent matters of justice. Torres' studies in Europe sowed seeds of dissent which later bore radical fruit in the Colombian social struggle. For the time being, however, he would exercise his knowledge in service of the institutional church. Upon his return to Bogota in 1959, he accepted appointment as student pastor at the national university together with a professorship in sociology.

Torres gradually but inexorably entered ever deeper into the political conflict which rocked Colombian society in the late 50s and 60s. By 1962, because of his political involvements, the cardinal relieved him of all university positions, although still allowing him to serve in other positions. Torres had become a highly public figure, one of the few with credibility in mediating the increasing polarization between right and left. Torres' sympathies, however, rested with the poor, especially after repressive military action in 1963 against a coalition of organizations supporting land reform and seeking political independence. How far Torres had shifted allegiance from the privileges of his birth can be seen from the title of a lecture given in Louvain in 1964: "Revolution Is a Christian Duty." Rather than use his influence within the existing political process, Torres shocked family, friends, and the populace by joining the

guerrilla forces late in 1965. By this time church officials had acted to laicize Torres. On February 15, 1966, Torres was shot to death in a skirmish with a military patrol.

With much detail, Wind weaves the story of how Camilo Torres, motivated by concern for the neighbor, was led ever deeper into the liberation struggle that finally took his life. She leaves unanswered the question of how a Christian and priest could justify revolutionary violence. As in the case of Bonhoeffer, it is a question that cannot be answered in the abstract but only within the contingencies of a particular struggle. Wind clearly admires her subject and sympathizes with the cause of the Latin American poor. The language of the biography sparkles in bringing Torres' life and commitments off the page. The example of Torres ignited a controversy about the use of violence as a means of social change that critics of Latin American liberation theology applied indiscriminately in discrediting the movement. While Torres does serve as a prominent type of liberation praxis, there have been numerous others who have opted for nonviolent methods.

This short, animated biography deserves an English translation. This edition includes some historic photographs and a short bibliography of related works.

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The Cross and Human Transformation: Paul's Apocalyptic Word in 1 Corinthians. By Alexandra R. Brown. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. xxi and 183 pages. Paper. $16.00.

Professor Brown's goal is "to demonstrate the vital connection so often overlooked in studies of 1 Corinthians 1-2 between Paul's apocalyptic rendering of the message of the cross and his intent to promote reconciliation among the Corinthian Christians" (xii). To reach her goal she develops four major positions.

First, 1 Corinthians 1-2 comprise a tightly constructed apocalyptic argument that moves carefully from the division of the *mind* Paul implies in 1:10 to its opposite in 2:16, "but we have the *mind* of Christ."

Second, Paul's conflict with the Corinthians centers on different understandings of the term *logos*. For the Corinthians *logos* points to wisdom; for Paul it implies the cross event.

Third, Paul's word of the cross is performative language; that is, it does what it says it is doing. In Act One of the drama of salvation the Word deconstructs the perceptions of the hearer, including how s/he perceives God. In Act Two the Word and Spirit enable the believer to understand who God is: one who loves and justifies, not one who condemns.

Fourth, the transformed mind is able to bring into everyday living the reconciling ministry of the Spirit.

The author provides the reader with solutions to one interpretive conundrum after another and also opens new avenues to grasping the oft-cited yet oft-misunderstood Pauline theology of the cross. The book is thus quite useful for theological, exegetical, educational, and homiletical work.

Somewhat disappointing is her lack of discussion with other scholars. Especially surprising is her disinterest in the attempts of the last generation to define apocalyptic in terms of genre, literary function, and social function. Much has been written that would both confirm and challenge her views.

Still, Brown has laid out a clear thesis, on the whole defended it well, and in the process provided a fine resource.

Walter F. Taylor, Jr.

Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East. By Moshe Weinfeld. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. 300 pages. $34.00.

Weinfeld sets Israel's understanding of "justice" within its social context in the ancient Near East, particularly the context of royal administration and the periodic issuance of edicts of release from debts and other obligations to creditors and to the state. The biblical concepts of "justice" and "righteousness" are rooted in the elimination of social exploitation, and because of this fundamentally social—rather than individual—

orientation, it is the king and other leaders who are addressed most sharply by prophetic calls to effect justice. Weinfeld reviews both the word-field for terms relating to such "releases" in the ancient Near East as well as the various social contexts in which they were effected. This sets the background for the consideration of terms such as "justice," "righteousness," "kindness," and "truth" in the Bible.

The concept of "justice and righteousness," argues Weinfeld, has less to do with the proper execution of a blind and impartial justice than it does with a general attitude of social justice for the oppressed. For Weinfeld the concept of "justice" is more a "moral" category than it is a "legal" or "judicial" one.

After describing the basic social context, Weinfeld gives details on several specific areas: the central role of the king in the issuance of period proclamations of liberation (chapter two); the eschatologizing of the concept of the just king (chapter three); a detailed study of specific social settings for the proclamation of "freedom" edicts throughout the ancient Near East (chapter four); special liberties granted to temple cities and "cities of refuge" (chapter five); liberties granted to individuals and estates (chapter six); special cases relating to Egypt and the Hellenistic/Persian world (chapter seven); a detailed study of the sabbatical and jubilee legislation of the Pentateuch in its Near Eastern context (chapter eight); YHWH as the one who establishes equity in creation, exodus, and in his enthronement over Israel (chapter nine); the call of the individual to act according to principles of "justice and righteousness" (chapter ten); and the developing notion of Israel as God's holy people and of the land as God's possession (chapter eleven).

No one reading this work can mistake the Bible's call to justice for a pious and individualistic exercise in personal religiosity or a pedantic legalistic fascination for judicial correctness. This is what Weinfeld has done best, and one only wishes that he had made the point more clearly and directly, and had organized the chapters around what seems to be this central and most significant thesis.

Weinfeld suggests that the difference between Israel and the other nations is that the motives of ancient Near Eastern kings were tainted by self-serving aspirations to *appear* as just and upright kings (when in reality they were not?), whereas in Israel the motivation is the fulfillment of divine command. Apart from the tendentious nature of this observation, he immediately admits that the reality in Israel did not match the ideal, particularly in the case of Zedekiah. Indeed, the motivation behind both Israelite and Mesopotamian edicts of release is admitted to be that of serving the gods. In Israel, Weinfeld argues, such a relationship was understood as submission to the divine will whereas in Mesopotamia it was understood as the rendering of personal service to meet the needs of the god. It is this distinction which Weinfeld takes up in chapter nine (202-205). To draw such a distinction, however, undermines what Weinfeld desires to do in chapter eleven when he wants to understand Israel and its land in terms precisely of a people/community set aside to its God for divine service as modeled on the release of cult centers for such divine service. In general, Weinfeld's very finely detailed study demonstrates much more clearly the *continuity* of Israel's view of justice with that of the ancient Near East than it does any discontinuity.

Because of the fundamental social context for understanding the concept of "justice and righteousness," Weinfeld has little to say about the call of the citizen/believer to such acts (chapter ten). He moves quickly to discuss the transformation of the concept in the Second Temple period to acts of "charity" (225), but does not discuss in sufficient detail how this transformation came about or what social forces drove such a significant change. At what point did the moral call for liberation and release give way to the sort of "morality of alms-giving" that is reflected in rabbinic and New Testament literature, and how did the breakdown of Israel's central institutions in the exile contribute to this shift? These seem to be significant questions which require considerable further exploration.

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The Earliest Christian Mission to 'All Nations.' By James LaGrand. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995. 310 pages. Cloth. $89.95.

James LaGrand clarifies Matthew's understanding of mission through an in-depth analysis of the concept of Israel's mission to the nations employed in the Gospel and contemporary literature. He demonstrates the anachronistic tendencies of scholarship that interprets this concept in light of modern racial distinctions or of the rabbinic exclusivism that arose after 135 C.E. In the Hebrew Bible and the letters of Paul, all nations are recognized as God's people and Israel's particular role is constructed as election from among them. For Matthew, "Israel's mission to the nations is constitutive of the Christian gospel" (250). The "Messianic mystery" revealed here is that, as Israel's Messiah, Jesus gathers the scattered sheep of Israel and empowers them to fulfill their scriptural mission. The Great Commission is a charge to this renewed Israel (represented by the Apostolic community) to become God's agent for the salvation of humanity.

LaGrand dates Matthew's Gospel prior to 70 C.E., perhaps as early as 63. His arguments for this may not be persuasive, but the early date is not really necessary to establish his other points. The overall thesis challenges the old Tübingen dichotomy between Petrinism and Paulinism, as well as other classical constructions that may be inherently anti-Semitic. Indeed, LaGrand questions Hegelian formulations in general and, as he develops his argument, he also finds time to lambast the church growth movement and apartheid. The book seems less current, however, in other respects. It makes no mention of work by Amy-Jill Levine (1988), Andrew Overman (1990), David Balch (1991), or Anthony Saldarini (1994), all of whom have addressed the Jewish social setting for Matthew's missionary community. Dialogue with these would have been useful, though their insights are more often compatible with LaGrand's ideas than contradictory to them.

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Women in the Acts of the Apostles. A Feminist Liberation Perspective. By Ivoni Richter Reimer. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995. xxvi and 302 pages. Paper. $24.00.

In her dissertation, Reimer studies every mention of women in the Acts of the Apostles using feminist, liberationist, and social historical methods from a self-described historical critical perspective. Reimer analyzes Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), Tabitha (9:36-43), Lydia (16:13-15, 40), the oracular slave (16:16-18), Priscilla (18:1-3, 18-19, 24-28), and women mentioned briefly in the narrative.

Reimer's discussion of Ananias and Sapphira well illustrates her approach. She discusses the text in light of first century Jewish marital property laws and concludes that Sapphira's sin was acting as accomplice for her husband in withholding property from the early community; she collaborated with his sin and did not resist. Similarly, she takes New Testament scholarship to task for understanding Lydia the purple merchant, πορφυρόπωλις, as wealthy. Utilizing primary source material, Reimer concludes that Lydia worked with her own hands, performed a despised trade, and was a member of the common people, the *plebs urbana.*

Reimer's emphasis on text-critical and philological issues and her reliance upon epigraphy and primary source literature is commendable, while her uncritical use of some feminist exegetes and some of her conclusions about first century society are open to question. For example, the *pater familias* was not as pervasive and as authoritarian in practice as Reimer would have us believe.

This book is marred by word divisions irritating to the eye and distracting to the mind; "text" is divided at the end of a line as "t-ext"! The translator and editors left in two or three discussions about gender in German translations, which are irrelevant in an English edition. Her prose style suffers from frequent repetition, "dissertationese," and the overuse of liberationist jargon.

Despite these reservations, I highly recommend this book for the new perspectives Reimer brings to texts often ignored or allowed to stultify in the "received tradition" of exegetical

scholarship. Reimer has succeeded in reclaiming the women of Acts for both our understanding of the ancient world and for modern proclamation and praxis.

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New Testament Greek Manuscripts. Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus. Part I: Matthew (Preliminary Printing). Edited by Reuben J. Swanson. Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University, 1995. xviii and 392 pages.

In this volume Swanson tests the waters for a new method of presenting textual variants. The standard critical apparatus at the bottom of the page uses immensely compressed sigla to present massive data. Swanson's differs in two ways. 1. Variants are entered against Codex Vaticanus (B), not against a resultant text formed against the *textus receptus* (the result of modern scholarly evaluation of the manuscript tradition). 2. Variants are printed in horizontal lines under the text of B with underscores to call attention to the variant to consider.

Swanson suggests three criteria to evaluate a critical edition: "completeness, accuracy, and efficiency" (v). Swanson records completely the variants from 22 of the extant 98 papyri, 28 uncials, 17 cursives, Clement of Alexandria, and three modern editions. He claims greater accuracy than Nestle-Aland. Swanson claims more ease of use (efficiency) than other editions, since the variants cited are immediately clear. Additional information is presented in a series of footnotes at the bottom of each page: lacunae in cited manuscripts, orthographic variants, contractions in *nomina sacra*, ancient chapter divisions and headings, and the Eusebian canon table numbers. A concluding section interprets variants from Matthew 1-7 as an aid for beginning students.

Is this format a great advance over earlier editions? It is probably too early to say. The variants are easily identified at a glance. A beginning student does not need to master a complicated set of sigla to interpret the apparatus. The apparatus with chapter indications, titles, and lectionary directions contains a great quantity of information—though students will have trouble interpreting this material without a table to help them resolve abbreviation. Finally, the system is space hungry. It takes 296 pages to present Matthew. The 27th edition of Nestle Aland uses 680 for the entire New Testament.

Swanson is an alumnus of the Lutheran School of Theology, with a Ph.D. from Yale, and is an experienced college and seminary teacher. That experience shines through in this volume. One hopes that this preliminary edition will be used a great deal and that the publisher will invite informed reaction and evaluation from instructors. In the meantime, it is a pleasure to welcome its appearance and wish it well.

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The English Religious Tradition and the Genius of Anglicanism. Edited by Geoffrey Rowell. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992. 256 pages. Paper. $18.95

Three years ago Keble College in Oxford held a lecture series celebrating the bi-centenary of the birth of John Keble, the gentle poet/priest who became a significant figure in the Oxford Movement in the 1830s. In a sermon preached during the event, Geoffrey Rowell summarized the challenge Keble bequeathed to the church: (1) to not despise its tradition; (2) to remember that it is a communion, not a bureaucracy; (3) to place prayer at the center of its life; (4) to cultivate a sense of awe in worship through the poetic imagination; and (5) to mirror the gentleness of Christ. As Rowell indicates, Keble possessed a strong sense of beauty, a simple dedication to God's will, and a vigorous desire to preserve the truth of the apostolic faith by rejecting "the habit of resolving the high mysteries of faith into mere circumstances of language."

Rowell has successfully edited the twelve lectures and two sermons of the series into a book dealing with eleven important figures in the English religious tradition. Four papers treat pre-Reformation thinkers having significant historical influence: Patrick Wormald claims that

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* succeeds in defining English national identity and destiny; Richard Southern documents the influence of Anselm on the development of local forms of worship, church organization, and models of prayer and meditation; Benedicta Ward reads Julian of Norwich's reading of Revelation; and Anne Hudson demonstrates John Wyclif's support for Bible translation and lay education.

Others offer essays on Anglican figures. Patrick Collinson suggests that Thomas Cranmer preferred Augustinian "factitive" to "Lutheran forensic" righteousness. (On this I am convinced that Luther too was more "Augustinian" than "Lutheran.") Henry McAdoo shows how Richard Hooker's scriptural exegesis grounded his theological synthesis, and Elizabeth Clarke explores George Herbert's *The Temple*. In my favorite essay, A. M. Allchin discusses Lancelot Andrewes' subscription to the doctrine of deification. After Gordon Wakefield's contribution on the Wesley brothers and Stephen Prickett's on Keble's understanding of the university as the "shadow of the church," Adrian Hastings reviews William Temple's life-long penchant for stressing the intelligibility and goodness of creation over its dire need for redemption. A final article by Stephen Sykes discusses the general features of Anglicanism's "genius."

Despite the broad scope of the book, the brevity of Rowell's Introduction, and the (predictable) unevenness in scholarship among the essays, the book remains surprisingly focused and useful. I recommend it highly.

Dennis Bielfeldt
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Prayer in the New Testament By Oscar Cullmann. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. xvii and 190 pages. Paper. $19.00.

I have three different Festschriften for Oscar Cullmann on my shelves. Over 20 years after the last one was published he is still a productive scholar, as *Prayer in the New Testament* shows. One would never guess that the author is over 90 years old! Cullmann surveys the difficulties people have in praying in the first 14 pages, then summarizes "What the New Testament says about Prayer" in the Synoptic Gospels, the Pauline corpus, the Gospel and Epistles of John, and (much more briefly) in Acts, 1 Peter, James, Hebrews, and Revelation. The last 20 pages correlate the NT views with the modern problems with prayer.

Cullmann holds that in prayer we encounter God, entering into God's life. Prayer always involves both belief in God's responses to prayer and our willingness to "submit to his will in reverence to his majesty." Cullmann devotes thirty pages to an interpretation of the Lord's Prayer, which (along with the prayer in Gethsemane and John 17) includes all the essential features of Christian prayer.

Cullmann provides extensive notes, almost totally given over to continental literature. In my opinion Cullmann pays too little attention to the eschatological dimensions of the Lord's Prayer and of Christian prayer in general. But pastors will find this to be a very useful and valuable book; it will inform preaching and enrich adult education.

Edgar Krentz

The Social World of the First Christians. Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks. Edited by L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. xxix and 418 pages. Cloth. $54.00.

This volume is a rich and fitting tribute to Wayne A. Meeks of Yale University, one of the most generative, creative, and influential New Testament scholars of this generation. Best known for his ground-breaking work on the social world of the Pauline churches in *The First Urban Christians* (Yale University Press, 1983), Meeks' more recent scholarship has focused on the larger context of early Christian moral teaching and practice, in *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Westminster, 1986) and *The Origins of Christian Morality* (Yale University Press, 1993). He was also the general editor of the excellent *HarperCollins Study Bible* for the NRSV (HarperCollins, 1993), an indispensable tool for teaching and study.

This Festschrift for Meeks includes essays

by a distinguished group of scholars, including colleagues, conversation partners, and former students. The editors have divided the volume into four sections: Paul and his Communities, Early Christians in Their Social World, The Religious and Social Environment of Early Christianity, and The Shaping of Early Christian Culture. Readers of this journal will find especially illuminating the essays in the first two sections. In each case a new perspective is drawn on a New Testament passage by a carefully considered reconstruction of its original social context. As an aid to temptation, here is a taste of the first four:

Nils Dahl argues that the conflict between the church leaders Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2-3) was central to Philippians. J. Louis Martyn gives an illuminating treatment of the "elements of the universe" in Gal 4:3 and 9, which provides an entryway into explaining Paul's complex and seemingly contradictory perspective toward the Law in that letter. J. Paul Sampley argues against much current interpretation that romans cannot be read, like the rest of Paul's letters, as a direct address of that church's current situation; rather, for diplomatic and rhetorical reasons Paul there employed "oblique speech" to suggest and prod, but not directly confront, the Roman Christians with their shortcomings. Jouette Bassler presents a convincingly framed argument for her novel "modest proposal" that the enigmatic *skeuos*, "vessel" which one is urged to "acquire" in 1 Thess 4:4, is a referent to a "virgin partner" (not a wife), a practice which, she suggests, Paul recommended in all his churches. Other essays treat topics ranging from the thorn in Paul's side, to parents and children in the letters of Paul, to rich and poor in Luke-Acts.

May this suffice to whet the appetite for further study of these and the remaining excellent essays in this fine volume.

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I Am a Happy Theologian. By Edward Schillebeeckx. Translated by John Bowden. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1994. xv and 103 pages. Paper. $11.95.

This translation of *Sono Un Teologe Felice. Colloqui con Francesco Strazzari* (1993) is the first book from Schillebeeckx since 1989. But let the reader beware; this is not a book of the type we expect from the author of *Jesus* (1974), *Christ* (1977), and *Church* (1989). It is, rather, a series of light conversations between Schillebeeckx and an interviewer, Francesco Strazzari. Schillebeeckx's replies (mostly in French, but sometimes in German and English) were apparently first translated into Italian, and subsequently into English. (There is no indication this English translation used the original transcriptions.) The result for the reader is a curious and frustrating group of remarks, for the ambiguity implicit in Schillebeeckx's intimate, elliptical, and informal speech compounds in translation.

The book consists of an informative Introduction by Rosino Gibellini, Strazzari's brief Preface, 78 pages of transcribed Schillebeeckx responses, and an Appendix including such disparate material as a "Prayer Psalm" composed by Huub Oosterhuis, a 1933 letter from Matthijs to Schillebeeckx inviting him to visit the Dominicans in Ghent, a memorial penned by Schillebeeckx in honor of the late Marie-Dominique Chenu, and two Schillebeeckx sermons. There is no index, and the few explanatory footnotes (written by whom?) are sometimes imprecise and confusing.

Part I of the transcriptions briefly describes his childhood, education, choice of vocation, involvement with Vatican II, and experiences with the Roman authorities. This makes illuminating reading for those already acquainted with the post-Vatican II ecclesiastical and theological context. Part II has wider appeal, for here Schillebeeckx pronounces for the first time on many theological subjects. In the midst of ruminations on creation, Trinity, mariology, eschatology, ethics, and ministry, Schillebeeckx makes these tantalizing comments: "Creation is the experience of contingency, but in relation to God" (48); "God is Trinity, but God is not three persons" (52); "Mary is the big sister of all

Christians" (61); "There is no revelation in ethical matters; ethics is a human process" (70). Unfortunately, the format does not allow for developing ideas beyond the embryonic stage.

While clumsy translations and typographical errors riddle the book, the occasional flashes of Schillebeeckxian theological brilliance may be worth its price. It should be read by all interested in Schillebeeckx and the post-Vatican II theological context.

Dennis Bielfeldt

The Synagogues and Churches of Ancient Palestine. By Leslie J. Hoppe. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994. 152 pages. Paper. $11.95.

This is a brief, but exceedingly helpful survey of synagogues and churches built in the holy land before the Arab conquest of A.D. 638. After describing the origins, functions, and architecture of ancient synagogues (ch. 1), Hoppe takes up two Galilean synagogues (ch. 2): Nabratein (source of the only Torah shrine recovered in an ancient Palestinian synagogue) and Capernaum (once famed for its supposed connection with Jesus, now notorious for the divergent dates offered by historians of art and the excavators).

Skeptical of identifying any first century structure (Herodion, Masada, Tomb of David) as a synagogue, he discusses six Judaean structures validated as synagogues (ch. 3), two Samaritan houses of prayer, four Jewish. Four scattered synagogues are distinguished by a large mosaic zodiac pavement. A central medallion depicts Helios (Greek sun god) riding in the solar chariot, while an outer circle depicts the twelve signs of the zodiac, which may have functioned as a kind of liturgical calendar or (more likely) may reflect the worshippers' belief in the influence of heavenly bodies combined with more orthodox biblical ideas.

Of 276 structures identified as churches Hoppe discusses the various phases of the Bethlehem Church of the Nativity (ch. 6), one each in Nazareth and Capernaum (ch. 7), four churches around the Sea of Galilee (ch. 8), eleven in Jerusalem (ch. 9), and four in central and southern Palestine (ch. 10).

Hoppe's aims are clear. He is concerned to do more than locate structures in space and time, dating them securely, describing their art and architecture—though that alone would be worthwhile and valuable. He has the conviction that in the days ahead "the most academically valuable studies of Judaism and Christianity's formative years will be those that integrate literary and archaeological scholarship (139). He delights in showing how the archaeological evidence at times contradicts the data contained in literary records. For example, while literature seems to stress the growing gulf separating church and synagogue, some Roman-Byzantine sites (Capernaum and Sepphoris) offer a picture of relationships between Christians and Jews that one can even call cordial. That more cordial history may aid in producing more cordial relations between the two faith communities today. These structures of wood and stone are expressions of faith that reveal the fundamental spiritual convictions of their builders. Therefore archaeology can give us a more realistic picture of the faith and life of others. Individual authors often have an apologetical or polemical axe to grind. Architecture is the product of a community being itself, not caught up in defining itself against another community. Yet, as the Helios mosaics show, current fashions influenced buildings like literature and show how communities accommodated themselves to their surrounding culture.

The physical remains of churches and synagogues paint a picture of diversity within each faith community. Formative Judaism and early Christianity were anything but monochromatic, and archaeology is of enormous help in breaking through caricatures hallowed by tradition. Hoppe's brief book is a handy guide through this complicated story.

Robert H. Smith

Paul's Letter to the Philippians. By Gordon D. Fee. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995. xlvi and 497 pages. Cloth. $45.95.

This commentary on Philippians is part of the NICNT series of which the author is a general editor. Fee maintains that Philippians is a unified letter which Paul writes from his prison in Rome in the early 60s. He argues that Philippians reflects the characteristics of a "letter of friendship" which Paul uses to exhort his compatriots in the gospel to remain faithful to Jesus despite the opposition they are experiencing in Philippi (cf. Phil 1:27-30; 2:17). This opposition is shaped by the Roman character of the city (cf. pp. 31-32). Paul understandably plays on the Philippian believer's "dual citizenship" in Phil 1:27 and 3:20, as he urges his friends to "stand fast" in one Spirit. He presents Jesus (Phil 2:6-11) and himself (Phil 3:4-14) as paradigms, models that support a way of "thinking" he hopes the Philippians will adopt.

Disappointing is the absence of any recognition on Fee's part of the fact that Philippi, at the time when Paul writes Philippians, is a military colony. Earlier settlements of soldiers (Mark Antony's in 42 B.C.E. and Octavian's [Caesar Augustus] in 31 B.C.E.) were made in Philippi and citizenship was granted to these veterans and their families. Thus, subsequent children are citizens as well. Consequently, the population of Philippi around Paul's time is largely made up of citizens, whether veterans themselves or the descendants of veterans. In fact, Paul employs both military metaphors and a military strategy (Phil 1:27-30) to convince these former soldiers that their Christian citizenship requires a conscious effort. Furthermore, these citizen-veterans have taken an oath of loyalty to the emperor (*sacramentum*) which would make their profession "Jesus is Lord" (Phil 2:11) all the more offensive to their non-Christian neighbors.

Despite that observation, what makes this particular commentary useful in the parish is its hermeneutical approach. At the end of every section in the commentary, Fee includes pastoral applications of the material he has just examined. An extensive bibliography and copious footnotes are also helpful to readers who want to further their understanding of the various components of this valuable letter.

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Exploring the Gospel of John. In Honor of D. Moody Smith. Edited by R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. xxxiv and 409 pages. Cloth. $42.00.

Festschriften are notoriously difficult to review; the better they are, the more difficult. This Festschrift honoring D. Moody Smith, Professor of New Testament at Duke University Divinity School, at his sixty-fifth birthday, demonstrates that well. Twenty international scholars wrote articles on the Gospel of John (GJ) grouped under these rubrics: (1) the nature and history of the Johannine community; (2) traditions underlying the GJ; (3) literary analysis of the GJ; (4) theology of the GJ; and (5) appropriating the proclamation of the GJ. Smith's major publications dealt with the Johannine literature. That makes this Festschrift especially fitting and, at the same time, gives the work a unity that makes it a major contribution to Johannine studies.

The list of contributors is impressive: Robert Kysar, Peder Borgen, J. Louis Martin, C. K. Barrett, Steven Smalley, Wayne Meeks, and John Painter, to name only a few. [Omission of the other fourteen is no value judgment.] Twenty-one students whose dissertations Smith supervised are listed as congratulators. Had the editors asked members of the guild of New Testament students to put their names on a list of those joining in the congratulations, it would have been long. I certainly would have wanted my name on that list. Failing that, I salute this impressive Festschrift as worthy tribute to an outstanding scholar. *Ave*, D. Moody Smith, *et floreas in multos annos*—with more from your pen.

Edgar Krentz

Bibliography of the Septuagint. Bibliographie de la Septante 1970-1993. by Cécile Dogniez. Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, vol. LX. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995. xxxii and 327 pages. Cloth. $116.25.

An Exegetical Bibliography of the New Testament: Romans and Galatians. Edited by Günter Wagner. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996. xiv and 379 pages. Cloth. $40.00.

Bibliographies are as difficult to review as they are significant for research. There is no thesis to a bibliography, no plot to the story. So what does one say? One describes the coverage, evaluates the comprehensive character, and indicates who might find it useful.

The volume by Dogniez fills a real need. Material related to the Septuagint (LXX) is scattered through many bibliographies: *Old Testament Abstracts, New Testament Abstracts, Biblica, Die International Zeitschriftenschau für Bibelwissenschaft, L'Année Philologique*, etc. Now we have in one volume the literature related to LXX research for a quarter of a century. And it is an impressive list, indeed. She divides the material into thirty-one sections. The first fourteen cover general studies and work on the origins and significance of the LXX; principles and techniques of translation, the theology, interpretation, and inspiration of the LXX, Aristeas' Letter to Philokrates, and the significance of the LXX for textual criticism of the OT. Sections 15 to 28 give the bibliography on the influence of the LXX on Qumran, Targums, Peshitta, NT, Philo, Josephus, subsequent Greek versions, the Greek church fathers, the Hexapla, and Jerome. Section 29 gives the bibliography on individual books, including the deutero-canonical books, the Psalms of Solomon, 3 & 4 Maccabees, the so-called Odes and Psalm 151. Section 30 treats the ancient translations of the LXX, section 31 the illustrations in LXX manuscripts. An index of authors concludes the volume.

The book's design is excellent. Each entry is a separate paragraph. Works in Hebrew are so identified, if titles are given in English. This indispensable guide for anyone studying this most ancient of biblical versions supplements *A Classified Bibliography of the Septuagint* by S. P. Brock, C. T. Fritsch, and S. Jellico (Leiden: Brill, 1973). Every scholar in Old Testament or New Testament studies will find this a useful guide to a field that is growing rapidly.

Wagner's bibliography on Romans and Galatians is one of a series on the New Testament. It continues the format of its predecessors. Wagner's bibliography includes journal articles, articles from polygraphs or collected essays, and monographs, but not commentaries. Entries are grouped by chapter and verse of the books, arranged in chronological order of publication. Under each verse or section the bibliography is printed as a paragraph, with authors' names printed in capitals. Thus the typographic design is much more crowded and difficult to read than Dogniez's. There is an extensive list of journals and series indexed, but no index of writers. Thus one can not use Wagner's volume, for example, to identify all the contributions of G. Bornkamm or E. Käsemann to the study of Romans.

Wagner's volume does not fill a gap in the same way Dogniez's bibliography does, since electronic data bases now aid in compiling extensive bibliographies in New Testament studies. It will be valuable for the earlier entries that antedate at present such databases. Both volumes belong in the reference collections of every seminary or divinity school library—and deserve wide use.

Edgar Krentz

Briefly Noted

Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament. Volume 8. Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Eerdmans, $45). Congratulations to the editors for their persistence in producing this semantic analysis of Old Testament words. Their aim is to present the fundamental concepts intended by words and terms and the specific nuances of meaning they have in each book or tradition in the Bible. The survey of meanings also includes occurrences in ancient Near Eastern writings, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Septuagint. Especially important among the seventy-some entries in this volume is the study of the words for "desert," "sign, "miracle," "death," "altar," "tribe," "messenger," "idol," "commandment," "place," and "asylum." *RWK*

Plotted, Shot, and Painted. Cultural Representations of Biblical Women. By J. Cheryl Exum (Sheffield Academic Press, $18.50 paper; $60 cloth). "Plotted" refers to the narrative handling of the stories, "shot" refers to the way biblical women have been treated in movies, and "painted" refers to an analysis of artistic paintings of these same women. The emphasis is not so much on the way the biblical text treats women as on their portrayal in popular culture—in literature, art, music, and film. The women are Bathsheba and Michal, wives of David, the five women involved with the baby Moses, Ruth and Naomi, and Delilah. A separate chapter deals with images of violence against women, especially where God appears as subject and the object of his abuse is personified Israel/Judah/Jerusalem. E. notes how many paintings of Bathsheba make the viewers voyeurs or how both paintings and films bring out the sexual connotations of the relationship between Ruth and Naomi. De Mille's movie treatment of Delilah makes her a femme fatale and ascribes concrete motivations of love, hate, and revenge to her. This fascinating feminist critique reveals a great deal about popular culture, and not a little about the Bible itself. *RWK*

High Places in Cyberspace. By Patrick Durusau (Scholars Press, $19.95). This guide locates and explains hundreds of sites on the Internet dealing with biblical and religious studies, classics, and archeological resources. Updates can be found at http://scholar.cc.emory.edu/scripts/highplaces.html. The book begins with over sixty pages of descriptions of Email discussion lists dealing with these issues. If you haven't surfed the net yet, you literally do not know what you're missing. This book may keep you from getting lost. *RWK*

Prophecy & Apocalypticism. By Stephen L. Cook. (Fortress, $21). Most studies of biblical apocalyptic assume it came from socially marginalized or deprived groups. In this impressive study, however, C. holds the opposite to be true, at least in the cases of Ezekiel 38-39 (Gog of Magog), Zechariah 1-8, and Joel. The authors of these texts, in his view, were Zadokites, the priests who were at the center of exilic and postexilic society. All three of these writings expected an end-time assault on Jerusalem, and Joel and Zechariah anticipated a time of agricultural success. C. calls into question the ideas that postexilic society was ripe with factionalism and that the priests harbored a realized eschatology. He believes that Israel's exile marked the end of an era in people's minds and therefore it raised expectations of a coming radical change in the world. Lookout for the year 2000! *RWK*

Divine Commitment and Human Obligation. Selected Writings of David Noel Freedman. Edited by John R. Huddlestun. **Volume 1: Ancient Israelite History and Religion** (Eerdmans, $45); **Volume 2: Poetry and Orthography** (Eerdmans, $30). Freedman has been one of the most prolific Old Testament scholars of the second half of the twentieth century, renowned most, perhaps, for his editing of such massive

works as the Anchor Bible Commentary and the Anchor Bible Dictionary (his editorial comments to writers have sometimes been as long as the original manuscript itself). These two volumes reprint 62 of his articles, first published between 1949 and 1993. F. carries on the tradition of the Albright school although with a great deal of enthusiasm for new methodologies, including the use of computers, that have emerged during his career. In general, the articles in volume 1 are of the greatest interest for pastors and others interested in Old Testament theology. Volume 2 will appeal to specialists in the technicalities of Hebrew language and poetry. *RWK*

Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor. By Martha T. Roth, with a contribution by Harry A. Hofner, Jr. (Scholars Press, $14.95). This volume contains law collections from the ancient Near East, with parallel columns giving the text in the original language (Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, and Hittite) and in contemporary English. The oldest of these collections dates to ca. 2100 B.C.E. These collections are now recognized as products of the scribal schools or of royal administration. Surprisingly, little correspondence has been found between the provisions in these law collections and contemporary legal practice known from thousands of other inscriptions, but these collections surely are our best source for defining what the ancients meant by "justice." Roth translated the Sumerian and Akkadian materials, while Hofner translated the Hittite collections. There are several excellent indexes and a glossary; I for one would have appreciated an index to corresponding biblical laws. *RWK*

Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters. By James M. Lindenberger (Scholars Press, $29.95). Here we have the original text and a modern translation of most of the extant Hebrew and Aramaic letters written before the time of Alexander the Great, excluding those found in the Old Testament. A final chapter prints the only extant letters written in Edomite, Ammonite, and Phoenician. Most of the letters deal with military affairs though a few touch on religious or bureaucratic matters. These letters illumine many aspects of the biblical world (the final days of Judah; life under the Persians; a Jewish military colony in Egypt in the 5th century B.C.E., etc.). *RWK*

The Book of Proverbs. A Survey of Modern Study. By R. N. Whybray (Brill, $71.50). W. provides an account of scholarly study of the Book of Proverbs in the 20th century. Without claiming to be exhaustive, he summarizes, usually in chronological order, what's taken place in seven major categories, ranging from ancient Near Eastern background to theological meaning, from the structure of the book to its texts and versions. W. is always fair though the reader might hope for more guidance toward answers or for how to take a stand within a welter of often conflicting opinions. *RWK*

Jeremiah. International Critical Commentary. Volume II. Commentary on Jeremiah XXVI-LII. By William McKane (T & T Clark, $69.95). The first volume of this commentary, which appeared in 1986, was reviewed in *Currents* 15 (1988) 284-6. Together both volumes have 174 pages of introduction and almost 1400 pages of commentary! M. believes that the corpus of the book of Jeremiah is the product of a long growth extending into the post-exilic period and the shorter text of the Septuagint is generally witness to a more original Hebrew text than that of MT. Square brackets are used in the translation to show where MT is longer than LXX. Throughout M. debates with the commentators of the last century, seeking a middle course. Of the new covenant passage, with the law written on the heart and universal knowledge of God, he writes: "The setting up of a model which is impossibly distant from the shape of the present may be the expression of a grit which will not surrender hope and then its very extremism and unreality support the acceptance of the present: the engaging with it, enduring it and improving it." The page layout and the complex arguing with other scholars do not make for easy reading. *RWK*

The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. II. ם-ע. By Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner and others; Translated and Edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richard-

son (Brill, $154.50). In an extensive review of the first volume of this lexicon in an earlier issue of *Currents* (February, 1995, p. 58), I noted that this lexicon provides extensive etymologies for each word, identification of all forms, and of course, and most importantly, meanings. In addition to the raw materials for in-depth word studies, the lexicon also provides significant bibliography supporting and even contradicting its proposals. The German counterparts to this lexicon on eight letters of the alphabet were published between 1967 and 1983. In addition to his translation efforts, R. has incorporated numerous minor changes and corrections to the original text. May his energies continue so that he may soon complete all five volumes of this classic work. *RWK*

The Ugaritic Baal Cycle. Volume 1. Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2. By Mark S. Smith (Brill, $120). What we have here is the first part of a full scale historical critical commentary on the Ugaritic Baal text (14th century B.C.E.), comparable, say, to Hermeneia for the Bible. About half of the 114-page Introduction evaluates previous interpretations of the Baal Cycle, which tells how Baal wins recognition for his own kingship through his battles against Yamm (Sea) and Mot (Death) and through his acquisition of a palace. Each section of the commentary itself starts with bibliography, and then come the Ugaritic text, textual criticism, translation and vocalization of the text (Ugaritic has a consonantal writing system), and an exhaustive, line-by-line interpretation. At the end of the volume are 47 plates of superb pictures of the texts treated. Six clay tablets make up the Baal cycle; only two are treated here. The commentator wants to make three points through all this learned exposition: The Baal Cycle interrelates humanity, nature, and the world of the gods and yields an integrated vision of chaos, life, and death. Baal's kingship is limited, and the universe is often overshadowed by chaos and the transient character of life. Finally, the Baal Cycle expresses the heart of the West Semitic religion from which Israelite religion developed. S. hopes that his commentary will contribute to a deeper appreciation of the Baal Cycle and its relationship to the Bible. This technical work marks the coming of age of Ugaritic studies, which began with the discovery of ancient alphabetic cuneiform tablets in Syria in 1929. *RWK*

Dictionary of Feminist Theologies. Edited by Letty M. Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson (Westminster/John Knox, $39). Feminist theology has forever altered the face of biblical and theological study. This dictionary, with articles by 179 scholars, demonstrates the originality of feminist thought (e.g., articles on depatriarchalization, Gaia, or violence, sexual) and its impact on every aspect of contemporary theology (e.g., articles on Christology, ecclesiology, or theological education). The viewpoints of these authors is far from monolithic. Yet the angle of vision consistently discloses insights kept silent and hidden from conventional scholarship. An elaborate bibliography adds to the value of this major project. This unprecedented *Dictionary* should prove to be a major reference work for years to come. *Craig L. Nessan*

Contemporary Religious Ideas: Bibliographic Essays. By G. Edward Lundin and Anne H. Lundin (Libraries Unlimited, Inc., P.O. Box 6633, Englewood, CO 80155-6633, $75). This reference work consists of 12 major bibliographic essays (from 16 to 92 pages in length) organized around three categories: "The Literature of Knowing the Faiths" (world religions, Judaism, Catholic spirituality, Islam), "The Literature of Liberation" (feminist, African American, and Latin American liberation theologies), and "The Literature of Teaching the Faith" (eco-theology, religious education, devotional classics, aging, church libraries). Peter J. Haas, Phillip Berryman, and Kathleen O'Gorman are among the authors. The longest essay covers "Feminist Liberation Theology." The 16 pages on "Church Libraries: Their History, Organization, and Development" provide very useful and practical information for congregations. Lengthy "Author-Title" and "Subject" indexes maximize the usefulness of this book. Not many individuals may choose to purchase this volume but libraries should be encouraged to do so. Those beginning research in any of these areas will find helpful guidance. *Craig L. Nessan*

In the second edition of **The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English** (Eerdmans, $30) Florentino García Martínez provides translations of some 270 documents found in the eleven caves near Khirbet Qumran, virtually all the manuscripts that have readable continuous texts. The third edition of the hitherto standard translation by Geza Vermes contains only 62 of these texts. The translations are literal to enable the reader who cannot consult the originals to get a good sense of their literary style and content. (Wilfred Watson, who turned Martínez's Spanish original into English, deserves thanks.) This will certainly be the standard for English translations of these documents for the foreseeable future. It is complete, accurate, and accessible. Anyone interested in early Judaism and the origins of Christianity should secure this text. It would also be a good addition to any parish library. *Edgar Krentz*

J. Andrew Overman's **Church and Community in Crisis. The Gospel According to Matthew** (Trinity Press International, $28) is a very useful commentary in the new series The New Testament in Context. Overman places Matthew into its "social and political context," while paying due attention to literary context. He interprets the text in terms of its sections and pericopes, not line by line or word by word. In effect this commentary is a series of useful essays on the book. Matthew wrote the Gospel in the reign of Domitian or Trajan, at the time when Judaism and Christianity were separating definitively, somewhere in Galilee to encourage its commitment to the teaching of Jesus. He has an extensive bibliography on Matthew as well as suggestions for further reading on each section. There are no footnotes, but Overman knows Matthean scholarship well. Clearly written, this volume belongs in a parish library—where one hopes the pastor often uses it, too. Reading his *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism* (Fortress, 1990) beside this commentary would enhance the reading even more. *Edgar Krentz*

Archaeology fascinates many people as it uncovers the "stuff of life" from the past. William H. Stiebing, Jr., recounts the history of the modern discipline in **Uncovering the Past** (Oxford University Press, $12.95) for university students and interested readers, covering pre-historic, Egyptian, Near Eastern, Aegean, Roman, New World, Far-Eastern, Sub-Saharan African, and under-water archaeology from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Modern archaeology (1925 to the present) gets rather cursory treatment. Most of the great names in the period before 1925 get mention—though I missed Cyriacus of Ancona as a precursor of the eighteenth century travelers, some of the nineteenth century travelers (David Roberts), and some names who added refinements in the twentieth; Paul Lapp's introduction of the daily top plan as a complement to the wheeler-Kenyon baulk drawings; the use of balloon photography by Whittlesey-Myers, the originators of flotation and the use of palaeo-botany, and the like. Students and armchair archaeologists will find this well-written story fascinating—and the chronological listing of major events and discoveries in archaeology illuminating. The useful bibliography would benefit from a listing of journals that the readers might find interesting. *Edgar Krentz*

Commentary series are multiplying like rabbits. One of the latest is the Westminster Bible Companion. Seven volumes are published: Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, Luke, Romans, and First and Second Peter and Jude, plus the two to be mentioned here. **Mark**, by Douglas R. A. Hare (Westminster/John Knox Press, $16.99) and **Colossians, Ephesians, First and Second Timothy, Titus**, by Lewis R. Donelson ($15) typify the series. (1) They are written for a lay audience: no footnotes, reprint the NRSV text, have no index, give a minimal bibliography for further reading. (2) The introductions to each book are brief, yet give the essential material needed for interpretation. (3) Their primary aim is to illuminate the sense of the text. Pastors will find this series of help in preaching. The writers are known scholars, each knowledgeable in the area discussed. A good practical addition to a parish library. *Edgar Krentz*

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Preaching Helps

Ash Wednesday—Good Friday
Series C

The Lion, the Lamb, the Rooster and the Hen

How does it work? If we don't lie down with the Lamb, the Lion will get us? If we don't let the Hen take us under her wings, the Rooster will crow out bad news?

I don't think he did it deliberately or consciously, but the materials produced by **Pastor Wally Meyer** impressed me with the number of references to birds and animals. His materials impressed me in other ways as well, but I will let you read them for yourself, while I get back to the aviary and bestiary. And Wally is just noticing what's going on in the texts. Perhaps he misses a bet when he fails to describe the tempter (Lent 1) as that mythic beast, "the great red Dragon" (Revelation 12). But as I say, Wally never set out to multiply references to birds and beasts.

He does note how God cooked up a covenant with Abraham out of a heifer, a goat, a ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon (Lent 2). What a recipe! And Jesus made points by talking about Herod as a fox in the henhouse (also Lent 2). In fact you can and should make good use of those juxtaposed images in Luke 13: Herod the Fox, Jesus the Hen, and the crowds and masses are very vulnerable chicks. The Passover lamb gets an honorable mention in Lent 3, and then there's all those doomed pigs (and LWF pigs) in Lent 4 together with fatted calves and the desire for an intimate dinner party featuring young goat.

If Wally had been doing all this consciously, he would have reminded us that Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, not on a war horse but on a lowly jackass or beast of burden. And what a burden the beast bore that day, descending the Mount of Olives, crossing the Kidron, and laboring up toward the Temple.

In old churchly symbolism Luke, who supplies most of the Gospel readings during Lent, is pictured as an Ox, often used in ancient times as a sacrificial

animal, perhaps because Luke portrays a Jesus who is so compassionate, so caring, so willing to spend his power and his life for the sake of others. We turn to John for the readings for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. And the Eagle is John's sign. And that is fitting, for John soars so high in his telling of the story of Jesus. Wally has his own set of remarkable images involving an American Bald Eagle in his ruminations on Maundy Thursday.

And it all comes to its ordained climax on the Friday we rightly call "Good." The Servant, Isaiah tells us, is "like a sheep that before its shearers is silent." Lent brings us once more face to face with the mystery that the Great Shepherd is a Lamb, "cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of the people"—the people on whose behalf Isaiah confesses, "All we like sheep have gone astray." But the Lion of Judah, the Lamb of God, the Mother Hen will not let them go. Will not let us go.

Our contributor, Wally Meyer, is an old friend. He graduated from Christ Seminary-Seminex in 1977 and earned a D.Min. at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago in 1989. He served parishes in Apopka and Deerfield Beach in Florida before coming to St. Paul Lutheran in Pensacola in 1989.

Since studying with Don Wardlaw of McCormick while working on his D.Min., Wally has been intrigued with newer styles of preaching, especially visual and experiential. He has led seminars on preaching several times in Germany, once in Hungary, several times in Florida. He served as the ELCA representative to the General Synod of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany in 1993. Thanks, Wally, for your work in getting the rest of us started on the homiletical task of Lenten proclamation!

And what can I say to all the rest of you? How about this: Season after season, year by year, Matthew the Man, Mark the Lion, Luke the Ox, and John the Eagle speak and roar and bellow and shriek out the Good News of Good Friday and Good Easter. And I pray God's blessing on all of you, as you join your own tenor and alto and soprano and bass voices to theirs, bearing witness to God's eruption in our midst in the crucified and resurrected Jesus.

Robert H. Smith
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Ash Wednesday
February 25, 1998

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

First Reading

Most church music programs have put away the trumpets until Lent ends and the congregation needs them to accompany "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." But three trumpets sound in our lessons for Ash Wednesday.

The trumpet proudly announcing almsgiving in Matthew 6:2 is the opposite of the one sounding the alarm of retreat in Joel 2:1. The former invites joy, the latter panic. In place of pride, this includes shame at the sin that has brought on this devastation from an invading army. Israel had been caught by a just God. God had the radar detector pointed straight at them, and then turned on the siren (trumpet) and gave chase with red and blue lights flashing. God pulled them over saying, "Driver's license, please? Would you take it out of your wallet, please?" Israel wonders if God couldn't just turn off the lights for a time. Israel would like to ask God if they could pull off onto the side street so that their friends and enemies cannot see their embarrassment.

The trumpet blows again in Joel 2:15. This time it is to call an assembly. The people realize they will have to face this crisis together. Pastors will have to weep along with their people (v. 17). Have you pastors ever wept with your people? I have only wept a handful of times, but I have gotten choked up an armful of times. Once I baptized an infant in the neonatal intensive care unit of Sacred Heart Hospital. I stopped in at the chaplain's office afterward and mentioned to one of the sisters that I wished I could do that task without being choked up. A priest who had overheard came out from the other room and said, "When you can do that without getting choked up, it is time to look for a new line of work." Go ahead and weep with them, pastors. God requires it of you, unless it is time for you to look for another line of work.

"Hypocrites" are actors. The really good actors are the ones who begin to feel the part, to almost believe they are the person portrayed. The best ones fool themselves in order to fool the audience, appearing not to be acting at all. They know that sincerity is everything. (Latin: "without wax," unmasked.) If they can fake sincerity, they've got it made.

Pastoral Reflections

A monk was awarded a medal for being the most humble monk in his monastery. Then when he first wore it, the monks had to take it away from him. So it goes with the practice of piety.

The text suggests a picture of two theaters. One is large with a bright marquee out front boasting the appearance of the actors. Eager throngs flow through wide doors to cheer the superb performance.

The first act is almsgiving. It is set in the middle of crowded places of worship and busy streets. The opening overture begins with a trumpet fanfare, and all eyes are turned on the actor. The audience is impressed, and amid the cheers are heard murmurings, "I wish I could do that," and "I'm glad I came." There are critics, but they are silent, lest they appear jealous of all the attention, which they are.

The second act is set in the same place, where people are gathered for worship or for commerce. It begins with the actor in center stage, and the actor never leaves that spot. Arms are raised, the voice is professionally trained, and the people could listen to the

prayer for hours, which is a good thing, because they will have to. In fact, their attention span seems to be longer than that of God, who tired of the prayer during the first breath and went out to listen to some unspoken needs burdening those who did not make it to the theater that day.

The third act is different. This is the big fasting scene. It has no dialogue, but is all makeup. But the audience knows the meaning of the makeup, and is as impressed as it was in the first two acts. The audience exits through the big doors, glad they came, and hoping to see many more performances by this same actor. The actor leaves through the stage entrance, signs a few autographs for loyal fans, and goes home thankful for such a rewarding career.

There is another theater, a small one, hardly visible from the street, with only a small door on the side for the audience of One to enter. The audience offers no applause, so that it is hard to tell if there is an audience there at all. But still the faithful performer's show goes on. Actually it is not a performance at all, not even for the sake of the audience of One.

The alms are given because the poor need help. The prayers are offered because children need to speak to their parent (vv. 8-9 not in text). The fast is endured because the hunger of the spirit is great. It is quiet in the theater. Jesus says, One has seen and rewards. The audience is the Parent, the One addressed in the second act. And parents always love to see their children do well, and even more, do good.

The monks were right to take away the medal. That is the way it is with practicing piety. Is there any way to practice it at all?

These forty days of Lent have a dual emphasis: we seek to grow in the spiritual disciplines including almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, and we remember the sufferings of Christ. As we reflect on the latter, we grow in the former. *And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

First Sunday in Lent
March 1, 1998

Psalm 32
Deuteronomy 26:1-11
Romans 5:12-19
Matthew 4:1-11

First Reading

"This is only a test. If this had been an actual emergency...." The announcer eases our fears with this assurance prior to and following the long beep. You will hear no such disclaimer before or after this reading. This was not just a test. It was an actual temptation, and if Jesus had fallen for it, the plan of salvation would have come apart. The word in Luke 4:2 is "tempted," *peirazomenos*. The word in v. 12 and 13 is "test," *ekpeiraseis* and *peirasmon* respectively. Even if you have forgotten more Greek than most people ever knew, you can still tell there is little difference in the words. The difference in the English is not which particular enticements to sin are thrown our direction, but in whether we succumb. If we fall, we were tempted. If we resist, it was only a test, not an actual emergency.

The wilderness is well known among preachers as the Old Testament realm of evil. It is the place where God is absent, or at least ignored. In fact, maybe the wilderness is not that different from the land flowing with milk and honey. Jesus is led there by the Spirit and spends forty days there, *tempted by the devil.* The Old Testament lesson curiously omits reference to the wilderness, though Moses speaks in the present tense in this passage, that is, while in the wilderness. This list of imperatives by Moses began

sixteen chapters earlier with Moses asking the rhetorical question, *So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you?* (10:12) *When you have come into the land...* (26:1), future tense, you will set aside the first fruits. There were no fruits, first, second, or otherwise, in the wilderness. It seems that the day they enter the Promised Land is marked not by crossing the Jordan but by reaping a harvest. In verse 3 *today* seems ambiguous and may be the day of the declaration or the day of entry. A similar ambiguity with the word *today* is in the passion story in Luke 23:43.

In this text an Aramean wanders to Egypt, and a couple verses later, *with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm*, God's people are thrown into the Promised Land. Moses' concern here is not about the temptation that one meets in the wilderness but the one associated with abundance of milk and honey, of first and subsequent fruits without number. The ceremony proscribed is to counter the temptation they would face there. The most dangerous time for God's people would be when they would leave the wilderness.

Pastoral Reflections

How did the people of biblical times ever come to the conclusion that the devil was in the wilderness? If that is where temptation occurs, apparently we, living in a land of abundance, are never far from the wilderness.

It has often been noted that Jesus was well steeped in the Scriptures which helped him face the various temptations. But he remembered more than just the Scripture verses that he used as proof texts. He remembered the stories of the wilderness wanderings and especially the people's mistakes and God's grace.

Jesus was tempted at a time when he was hungry. That had happened to God's people before, back in the wilderness. They griped and complained and cried out for the fleshpots of Egypt. Jesus remembered their mistakes. More than that, Jesus remembered God's grace in sending manna to feed these sinful people in the wilderness and promised them a land flowing with milk and honey. Remembering their sin, and especially remembering God's grace, Jesus overcame the temptation.

Jesus was then tempted with the prospect of authority over others. That had happened to God's people back in the wilderness. They had incessant problems with Moses' authority. Maybe it was because of something buried in their childhood since the Egyptians had treated them harshly and afflicted them by imposing hard labor on them (Deut. 26:6). Moses would have had an easier job leading six million rebellious teenagers. Jesus remembered their mistakes. More than that, Jesus remembered God's grace in bringing them into the Promised Land for them to possess it (26:1). Remembering their sin and God's grace, Jesus overcame the temptation.

Finally Jesus was tempted to jump off the pinnacle of the temple and test God's faithfulness. Jesus remembered how God's people in the wilderness never could get enough proof of God's faithfulness. The only way they got into the wilderness in the first place was through a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders (26:8), but they always wanted more. Jesus also remembered God's grace in ways that caused Cecil B. DeMille tremendous technological challenges. Remembering sin and grace, Jesus overcame.

The devil departed from Jesus until an opportune time. One of those times was when Christ struggled with whether to give his life on the cross. But Jesus remembered the sins of God's people in the wilderness and our sins. And Jesus remembered God's

grace through Jesus himself.

The temptations have not changed since the wilderness, only the amount of vegetation. Facing the possibility of hunger, God's people today are tempted to hoard a little more of the first fruits for themselves. Faced with those whose authority we resent, God's people are tempted to derogate and undermine bosses, political leaders, parents, and bishops. Facing a secular world, God's people today are tempted to doubt. As preachers we are called to remind God's people of the frequent mistakes of others of God's people, and of God's incessant grace in Jesus Christ. Then pastors can offer not milk and honey but bread and wine "in remembrance of him."

Second Sunday in Lent
March 8, 1998

Psalm 27
Genesis 15:1-12
Philippians 3:17–4:1
Luke 13:31-35

First Reading

Who is more amazing in this Old Testament story? It may be God who is infinitely generous in promising descendants more numerous than the stars plus land from the Nile to the Euphrates. Or it may be Abraham who believes God, even when Abraham has thus far not received the first installment on these gifts. It is difficult to believe God's promises when we have not yet seen the first sign of remission of the cancer. *And the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness* (v. 6).

After God greets Abraham with the usual *Do not be afraid*, Abraham asks immediately, *O Lord God, what will you give me?* He and Sarah are old. When they made out their will, they had no choice but to write in the name of Eliezer of Damascus, a slave, as primary beneficiary. They wonder how long they will still have to wait for descendants to inherit the land. God tells them it will be another four hundred years.

Actually the four hundred years come in verses 13-16, not included in this reading. There is subtle irony here, that Abraham does not want a slave to be his heir, yet all of Abraham's descendants during four hundred years will be slaves.

Abraham asks for a sign in v. 8 and God tells him to cut apart a heifer, a female goat, and a ram, and to bring a turtledove and a young pigeon still in one piece each. God is about to "cut a covenant," as the Old Testament phrase goes. Even the wonderful liturgical ceremony that will comfort Abraham and restore his hope is spoiled by vultures coming to munch on the sacrificial offerings. (You thought a baby crying during the service could destroy the mood of worship.) Finally, after dark, the smoking fire pot and flaming torch appear and pass between the pieces. God has made the commitment, and Abraham believes.

Before the hen reference, when Jesus is warned that Herod wants to kill him, Jesus refers to Herod as a fox. A fox is a predator, to be sure, but insignificant compared to a lion or bear. He goes on to explain that he will not flee Herod but stay right where he is, casting out demons and healing, and when his work is finished he will go intentionally to Jerusalem, the only appropriate place for a prophet to be killed.

Pastoral Reflections

Abraham has loved and served God through his many years. His concern now is that God show some sign of love for Abraham. The issue in the Gospel lesson is reversed. It is established that God loves people. The question is whether the people will love God, or whether God too will suffer the pain of

unrequited love.

One does not need extensive experience with hens to know the feeling of unrequited love. But hens can bring the point home very well. Those more familiar with farm life tell us how comical it looks when a mother hen tries to gather all the chicks under her wings. No sooner is one tucked safely under one wing than a brother or sister chick slips out from under the other wing. Onlookers are amused. The chicks seem to be having great fun. But for the mother hen herself it must be miserable. Anyone who has felt the pain of unrequited love will not laugh at the hen's distress.

Jesus could have left hens out of it and spoken of human mothers trying to keep their children safely under their wing. Meanwhile the children are busy testing their new wings. Or we may think of our own experiences of unrequited love when we were first in love. Or pastors may identify with Paul who shed tears over congregation members who lived as enemies of the cross of Christ. You get the impression in 4:1 that Paul really did love these Philippians. The love of Paul for these people is exceeded only by that of Christ, yet both Paul and Christ experience the pain of unrequited love.

Jesus laments over his beloved Jerusalem, *How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!* Unrequited love.

Perhaps God's people have trouble seeing the Almighty as a mother hen. They prefer to picture God perhaps as a faithful dog, one who would follow us anywhere, and mindlessly protect us from our enemy, never stopping to ask whether we or the opponent is in the wrong. Viewing God this way causes God pain, the pain of unrequited love, the pain Christ endured on the cross.

Or God's people may see God more as a pesky raccoon who comes uninvited to join our picnic, who will meddle in our fun and try to take the things that are ours. Jerusalem which, Jesus says, *kills the prophets and stones those sent to it* (v. 34), must have seen God as a pesky raccoon, always intruding and spoiling the picnic until it is chased away by throwing stones. Viewing God this way causes God pain, the pain of unrequited love, the pain Christ endured on the cross.

Some may view God as a fat cat, one who is happy to receive our offerings, like an afternoon meal, and then curls up to sleep for the rest of the day. Viewing God this way causes God pain, the pain of unrequited love, the pain Christ endured on the cross.

Christ's pain intensified when he entered Jerusalem, when the time had come for the people to say, *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord* (v. 35). It was as if the bride accompanied the groom almost all the way to the altar, and then at the last moment, left him there abandoned. But in this case, the groom was sacrificed on that altar, and comes to us again in love each time we gather around the altar.

Third Sunday in Lent
March 15, 1998

Psalm 63:1-8
Isaiah 55:1-9
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Luke 13:1-9

First Reading

If it is true that low fat foods only make you fat on the lower half of your body, then the recipients of Isaiah's prophecy are in no danger of becoming pear shaped. They will receive the full fat.

Babylonian food would have been fine for an evening out at a restaurant. But after so many years in exile, God's people were

craving a good kosher meal. More difficult to find in exile than a good meal of lamb with matzoth was a feast on the Word of God. They had heard a few things from God's Word. By now they understood that they were not in Babylon by accident but by God's judgment. Many had decided by now that, like a child who does not care for green beans, the Word of God did not suit their tastes.

Isaiah will have to preach hard to coax God's children to try this new recipe for the Word of God. He even begins by telling them that it is free. Then he gives them a sample right off the grill: *I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David* (v. 3).

To these love-starved people, the prophecy tastes so good that they think it must be sinful. But this too is the Word of God, along with the words that follow encouraging them to repent, wash their hearts and not their hands, and prepare for supper... *that he may have mercy on them... for he will abundantly pardon* (v. 7).

How does steadfast love taste? Like rich, fat food, satisfying at mealtime when Isaiah serves God's dinner, and sustaining and energizing for the long trip home from exile. How do mercy and abundant pardon taste? Much like bread (v. 2) and wine (v. 1) taste to the Christian.

The second lesson stays with the food motif, looking back to the diet in the wilderness. *All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink* (vv. 3, 4). Paul is reminded of the bread and wine of the Eucharist, as their journey through the waters of the sea reminds him of Baptism. But these assurances of God's love do not preclude the ominous *Nevertheless* of v. 5. Paul wants the Corinthians, baptized and partaking regularly of the Eucharist, to learn something about how God's faithfulness works. Yes, it is firm like a rock, but a rock that moves regularly, and calls them to follow (v. 5).

The second lesson and Gospel have one striking element in common: the use of the negative example. Paul develops it in frightening detail in vv. 6-13. Many have taken v. 13a as good news of assurance that the Corinthians are in the same situation that others are who have overcome these temptations. It may be more in keeping with the context to view these words as warning that others have faced the same temptations and failed. The Good News would begin then only in 13b, *God is faithful...*

The Gospel lesson utilizes two different literary genres to make the one point about repentance. First is the negative example from current events. Jesus reflects with those surrounding him including victims of Herod's atrocities. Jesus knows that they are using these current events to support all sorts of theological speculation and conclusions about God and about the moral character of those who were victims. Remember the seminary professor who was asked how many points a sermon should have and answered, "At least one"? Jesus says there is only one lesson in it all: repent.

The second genre used in the Gospel lesson is parable, which as we all remember from seminary, has only one point. Again it is repentance. The image of the fig tree returns us coincidentally to the theme of food. This time, however, it is not the food that God's people eat, but rather food for God's consumption received from the people of God, the fruit of repentance.

Pastoral Reflections

The preacher should be sure to watch the news or read a newspaper during the week of Lent 3. The people gathered to listen on Sunday morning will have heard those same headlines of disasters and atrocities. As Jesus was called upon to comment on current

events at his time, so is the preacher today. Perhaps a mother of one of the victims among those who listened to Jesus this day was thinking, "How can a merciful and powerful God allow such tragedies to occur?" Maybe a pious old man thought, "Those victims all had it coming to them. God knew their lives better than we, and God brings vengeance." Certainly more than one secularized listener must have thought, "These events have nothing to do with God at all. These things just happen." The speculation will be the same whether the newswatchers are talking about atrocities of Herod or Timothy McVeigh, whether they are pondering the meaning of a tower that fell at Jesus' time or a killer tornado in Texas. (Note: These items were in the news at this writing, current ones are far more likely to be on the mind of the congregation the morning of Lent 3.)

Any theological explanation of the meaning of these events must begin with the qualifier provided in our First Lesson: We do not know, because God thinks and acts differently than we do (vv. 8, 9). Pastors will turn to these words frequently in helping people face various tragic and other situations in their lives. The comfort here is not just in knowing that God thinks and acts differently than we do, but that God thinks and acts "higher" than we do. Trying to understand God's actions puts us on the path of judging God, like fans on the stands correcting the umpire, as if we think and act "higher" than God does. More helpful is to speak of parents who think and act "higher" than their children. Children obey, even though they do not fully understand such mysteries as bedtime and getting shots and eating good, rich food instead of soda and candy.

The people in the Gospel lesson and the people in church on the morning this text is read tend to ask wrong questions at tragic times, questions like "How could God do this?" The right question is one of Martin Luther's favorites, "What does this mean for me?" A child dies. Wrong question: "How could God take this child?" Right question: "Why has God spared me?" Wrong question: "What might this child have grown to be if she had lived?" Right question: "What would God have me grow to be?" A chaplain visited a ninety-six year old woman in the nursing home who had just been diagnosed with cancer. The woman asked, "Why me?" Wrong question.

This is not to say that wrong questions do not need answers. Whether in pastoral counseling or in preaching, the wrong questions also need to be heard. But answering the wrong question may be less important than allowing the person to ask it, providing a listening ear. The pastoral task then is to direct the conversation toward the right question.

The right answer to the right question in all of these lessons is clear: Repent. Paul unfolds the full meaning of repentance with a plan for preaching in the second lesson under the theme, "Eat Right and Exercise." The Corinthians have eaten right, Baptism and Eucharist, but they are not exercising. Paul could speak with equal clarity against exercising without eating right, but that text would more likely come in the Letter to the Galatians.

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 22, 1998

Psalm 32
Joshua 5:9-12
2 Corinthians 5:16-21
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

First Reading

All three lessons deal with starting over. The first lesson describes the day when manna will be replaced with crops grown in the Promised Land. The second lesson says that in Christ a person becomes a new creation. In the Gospel, the son who was once dead and lost is now alive and found (vv. 24, 32).

Israel was hoping to live down the disgrace of slavery. Today we would say that there is no disgrace in being a slave. The disgrace belongs to the slave owners. They are the ones who bear the guilt for the relationship and the slave is the innocent victim. They did not see things that way in Old Testament times.

God says, *Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt* (v. 9). That is what they did with the largest stones before there were cranes or dynamite. Perhaps some of the stones that rolled away when the walls came tumbling down had tumbled into the plains of Jericho where they were now farming. Though stones may crush hope, Easter shows that there can be no rock so big that God cannot roll it away.

While the texts themselves provide plenty of preaching material without reaching into the context, the word *therefore* in the opening verse of the second lesson demands a look to the antecedent thought. Paul states in v. 14 and reiterates in v. 15 that Christ died for all people. This major premise is integral to and must be preached with this text, not just to keep the *therefore* from hanging alone, and not just because we should be talking about Christ's death during Lent, but because without this event, we are reconciled neither to Christ nor to others. Without it the older brother in the Gospel is our model for life. Without it the patient father really is a silly, old fool. The death of Christ for all people is what thousands of students of the sainted Richard R. Caemmerer, Sr., call "the means." Without means, the preaching will never reach its goal.

Notice the parade of farm animals in the Gospel. The pigs in vv. 15-16 communicate the depravity and degradation into which this son sank. This symbolism is understood not only by those who know how Jews feel about pigs, but also by those who know anything at all about the lifestyle of pigs. They are not bad animals. God created them with the ability to root around in the mud and find food underground. They make a great gift to the poor in Lutheran World Federation's "Pigs for Haiti" project. But for the same reasons, they can be repulsive to humans who need to live around them.

The fatted calf meats [sic] its doom in v. 23, brought to our attention again in vv. 27 & 30. Along with the festal attire of v. 22, this means celebration. Preachers could retell the story about joy in reconciliation, visiting the meal served to five hundred of this brother's closest friends. What did he say when they asked him, "What have you been doing with yourself?" What did he say when they chanted for a speech?

The young goat in v. 29 would bring up the tail in this parade of animals, except it reads *you have never given me even a young goat*. A young goat would not have been much compared to a fatted calf, but not even that for all of this older brother's hard work. That again is why we need the Good News of Christ to make sense out of this story. Fatted calves or young goats are not given for mere hard work, but only at the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

Pastoral Reflections

The word *disgrace* from the Old Testament lesson (v. 9) encompasses many experiences among God's people. As pastors reflect on their ministries, they remember times people have come with just those feelings. But on further reflection, how much more often has the disgrace kept the people from ever showing up at the office door at all? When they are disgraced, the pastor is the last one they would like to find out. Perhaps these people feel that pastors are too much like the older brother in the parable. They probably fear that pastors will judge them *from a human point of view* (second lesson, v. 16). They may not know that pastors are called to address disgrace with God's grace. If they ever do drag themselves in, just like the younger son, are they ever in for a surprise!

People will identify with the younger son. They will remember times when they brought shame upon themselves and their families, *no longer worthy to be called your son* (v. 19). They will recall having rehearsed their words when they would own up to their blunders to those that had been hurt the most as this son does in vv. 18-19. They will be able to imagine the sloping posture of the son approaching the father's house, the dryness of the throat, and the ambivalent thoughts about whether they should proceed at all. And if they have been blessed with family members who have themselves been touched by grace, they will know the joy of knowing that it doesn't matter anymore. The disgrace is simply *rolled away* (Old Testament). *Everything has become new* (second lesson).

As wonderful as grace and reconciliation with God is, that is still merely background to the main point of these texts. It is not just that God is reconciled to us through Christ, but that we are to be reconciled to others. It is not just that God is like the Father, but we are to be like the Father. Look again at the bizarre actions of the father in the parable, not as a description of God's love, but as a prescription for ours.

Ambassadors (second lesson) carry out the policies of their government. Ambassadors for Christ will love sinners. They will seem to others like they are from another country or even planet, perhaps a heavenly kingdom. They will probably be criticized for welcoming sinners and eating with them. By their reconciling actions they will raise as many eyebrows as did the sinners whom they befriend.

Years ago on a trip to Disney World, one of our children was very young and still being nursed. The best place for that motherly activity is in a building in the center of the Magic Kingdom where they also happen to bring lost children for reunion with their parents. My wife spent many hours there that day and overheard many reunions. She said they followed a distinct pattern: joy and tears and hugs that the lost child was found safe, followed immediately by scolding for having wandered off. This father never gets to the second half of the reunion routine. Most fathers, even if they allowed the son home, would have been much more low key about the welcoming ceremony and would have attached some conditions to further residence in the house, perhaps making the son one of the hired hands like this younger son had requested. Next time a penitent sinner comes your way, welcome him and eat with her, just as God does for you each Sunday.

Fifth Sunday in Lent
March 29, 1998

Psalm 126
Isaiah 43:16-21
Philip;ians 3:4b-14
John 12:1-8

First Reading

Isaiah's prophecy is the mirror image of the Exodus miracle. Instead of the *former things*, a dry path in the sea, God now gives *water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.* The people are encouraged to forget the former things because that could stifle their imagination for what the new will be. The new deliverer, the messiah, would not be a descendant of David. Neither was Moses, for that matter, but at least Moses was Jewish. Cyrus, the king of Persia, would be God's chosen instrument of deliverance. And we thought it was amazing when former Soviet block countries joined NATO! Isaiah's message is so new that he knows some will have trouble believing God's actions when they see them. Verse 19b: *Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*

In the kingdom of God, things are always changing. The OT reading says, *Do not remember the former things... I am about to do a new thing.* Paul writes to the Philippians that he is *forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.*

The exiles needed to forget because the old things would impede their ability to perceive the new. Paul needed to forget because the very things he considered his most valuable possessions in the past he now regarded as *rubbish* (v. 8). The list in vv. 4b-6 is recited as if read off Paul's office wall where he framed all his honors, his circumcision certificate, his pedigree papers, his law degree, his license to practice Phariseeism, his persecution award, and best of all his certificate of blamelessness under the law. Now all these things that used to assure him of God's respect are discarded in favor of the one thing that assures him of God's love, *knowing Christ Jesus my Lord* (v. 8).

The athletic images used by Paul could be misunderstood. They are active images: *straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal* (vv. 13-14). He is not talking about striving to be more righteous under the law, more blameless, or by persecution to beat out the competition as he had done in his rubbish days. Rather Paul presses on *toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.* Paul is straining to hear that call, to receive rather than to exceed. A helpful image may be the way we sit forward in the chair when the television volume is set too low, straining forward to hear. It has little to do with achievements and much to do with *knowing Christ Jesus my Lord* (v. 8).

The Gospel brings together themes from the "Book of Signs" (John 1-12) and the "Book of Glory" (John 13-21). All of the characters have their own stories, and each of those stories makes its impact on this story. If we would not remember on our own that Lazarus was the one Jesus had raised from the dead, John reminds us. Martha's serving story comes from Luke's Gospel, but she is also the one to whom Jesus says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life" before the resurrection of her brother Lazarus. We are already now introduced to Judas' true character.

Pastoral Reflections

On the one hand it is hard for people to appreciate symbolism if they do not have it explained to them. On the other hand there is so much behind every line of the Gospel reading, that explanation may be as satisfying as a scientific description of a rose.

Perhaps as we retell the story with a minimum of background, people will experience the impact of the story and still know that it has much to do with Christ's passion. As a joke is not funny when you have to explain it, so symbolism loses its impact when you have to abandon the narrative to review the background. Of course, Mary does not get it either. She does not understand that she is anointing Jesus' body for burial.

Mary takes no thought for the cost of the ointment. The Gospel writer, however, tells us that it was costly, and Judas knows too that there is a financial aspect to this act of devotion to Jesus Christ. Stewardship consultants tell us that there are various motivations for people to give. Two worth mentioning here are the needs of the church and our need to express love and devotion to our Lord. The needs of Jesus are not on Mary's mind, though Jesus says she has performed a service in anticipation of his passion. This text addresses our response to Christ's perfect act of love.

Yes, Judas, Mary does know the value of the ointment. That is why she used it. She must have had it on a shelf, toward the back, where nothing would bump it. She carried it to Jesus, watching her step carefully, squeezing the bottle a little tighter than necessary, lest she drop it. She may have second guessed herself when she first purchased the ointment, knowing that it was an extravagance, and that the money could have been used for something more practical, not to mention the poor. But now she seems to proceed without reservations. What sin must have been forgiven, what hopelessness dispelled, for Mary to respond by bringing this gift?

Sunday of the Passion
Palm Sunday
April 5, 1998

Psalm 31:9-16
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Philippians 2:5-11
Luke 22:14–23:56 or Luke 23:1-49

First Reading

When preaching on the processional Gospel, people may be disillusioned if we mention to our congregations that the Gospel narratives of Christ's entry into Jerusalem make no reference to the people singing *hosanna*. Instead they are always shouting. Perhaps we get the idea of singing from the content of their vocalizations. Some messages need to be shouted: "Give that to me before you hurt yourself!" "Duck!" or any sentence that begins with, "Hey, Ump...." But when the words are in psalm form, they should probably be sung, if not originally by the crowds on Palm Sunday, at least by our congregations today.

The Palm Sunday narratives are unanimous in recording the shouting. Matthew and Mark have the people "shouting, saying...." John reports them "screaming." Luke is the most lyrical as he hears them "praising God joyfully with a loud voice... saying..." (vv. 37, 38).

Maybe what actually came from their vocal chords was more like the chorus of "Jesus Loves Me" as sung by the pre-school choir. They may be a little shaky on the words of the verses, but when they come to "Yes, Jesus loves me," it resounds through the church. It is a peculiar kind of singing that, if an adult did it, would be called shouting.

The shouting is integral to the event of Jesus' entry. When the Pharisees object to the noise, Jesus responds, *I tell you, if these*

were silent, the stones would shout out (v. 40).

The second lesson is a song that Paul had sung with some of his congregations. In the song Jesus empties himself *taking the form of a slave* (v. 7). Maybe other slaves who would follow would understand Jesus' action best. They would sing, "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?"

There is no singing in the Gospel lesson, the story of the passion. The hymn after the Last Supper must have been a "may rubric" because Luke omits it where Matthew and Mark include it. The only other place where song may be appropriate is at the palace of Herod. *Jesus Christ, Superstar* has Herod sing in ragtime, "Show to me that you're no fool; Walk across my swimming pool."

There are elements of music in the story. A crescendo swells from accusations (23:2) to vehement accusations (10) to mocking (11). The percussion sounds with flogging (16), then shouting and more shouting (18, 21) increasing toward the point of *urgently demanding with loud shouts* (23) at which point *their voices prevailed.* After this climax, the story quiets down with wailing (27) and pounding of nails (33). Through the long decrescendo we hear words of forgiveness (34), of scoffing (35), of desperate petition (42), and of promise (43). The curtain tears (45), and Jesus cries with a loud voice (46). After a brief solo by the centurion (47) and the beating of breasts (48), the movement ends with a rest that lasts all day, *according to the commandment* (56).

Pastoral Reflections

The choir is rehearsing a piece to be sung on Easter. Most of the music for the day will be loud and boisterous, but this piece to be sung during the distribution of the Sacrament is more pastoral. As the director holds both hands up to indicate restraint, suddenly and very rudely the fire alarm blares forth with a piercing, ugly buzz that sounds fifty times louder than the music. A similar jolt jars the people who gather for Palm Sunday and hear the story of the Passion.

The liturgy calls for the choral and congregational singing to begin right at 11:00 a.m. with triumphant celebration of the entry into Jerusalem by the Christ the King, and then at 11:15 to change in tempo and key to the somber tones of the Passion. But preachers will deliver only one sermon. (We assume that you will preach rather than observe the rubric of letting the lengthy Passion story stand in place of the sermon. Otherwise you would not be bothering to read this study.) That one sermon will likely include both movements, the one into Jerusalem and the one to Calvary. The technically difficult part is preaching them as one story of God's love.

When springtime arrives, I open the windows on both sides of my office to allow the breeze to flow through. As I sit at my desk I hear through my left ear the sounds of birds and other animals in the woods. Often the preschool children are in the playground making their happy sounds. My right ear is directed toward a major street with heavy traffic. It is obvious which is more pleasant to hear, but both are the sounds of life. To listen to only one would give a distorted perception of reality.

Pastors may, through their words, bring their congregations to other places where sounds of pain and of joy clash. The airport provides a common space for arrivals and departures, laughter of children and weeping of sweethearts. The mother who has delivered a stillborn child is moved quickly away from other mothers in the maternity ward, lest their sounds of gladness make her crying more bitter.

Hosanna to the King, the songs and shouts of Palm Sunday, are heard through one ear on this day. Through the other, in the

same service, we hear dreadful sounds of crucifixion. Then comes silence, when it seems that terror has stilled all hope, and the victorious cruelty may rest since its victim is dead. Not a breath, not a heartbeat. But that is merely your impression if you make the mistake of listening with only one ear. The other ear senses rumblings of hope and a faint, distant shout of promise.

Maundy Thursday
April 9, 1998

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

First Reading

It is a common assumption that John has omitted any reference to the Last Supper in John 13 since he already did such a great job with it in John 6. While that may be true, it is also true that John's image of the footwashing points forward to the events of the next day just as surely as does the supper. The supper is Christ's body and blood, given and shed on the cross. The footwashing did far more than provide a couple hours of cleanliness for the disciples until they would walk out into the sand again. The dialogue with Peter culminates in v. 10, *One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean.* Obviously something greater is intended, apparently a reference to Christ's greatest work of servanthood, death on the cross. The second lesson is not exactly superfluous since it makes remembrance of the Supper unavoidable. The two are compatible enough that a preacher could use the John text while mentioning that Jesus both washed feet and shared his body and blood.

Verse 1 sets the stage for such an understanding of the text. *Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.* John 6 told the story of a miraculous feeding, and in the verses that follow, it becomes apparent that this is more than just a feeding. It points us also to Christ's gift of himself in his body and blood. Verse 1 tips us off that the footwashing will also go beyond the obvious meaning.

A more difficult transition may be the jump from Christ's servanthood to our own. Verse 34, *Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.* That is always the big jump in the Christian faith, from Christ's love to ours, so why should it not be an equally difficult jump in preaching?

The second lesson and Gospel have another intriguing, parallel element. The words of institution include the words, *This cup is the new covenant in my blood.* We are reminded, perhaps less consciously than were the twelve around the table with Jesus, of God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah and their descendants. In the Gospel lesson, spoken the same night, are the words, *I give you a new commandment.* The first ten, of course, were given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In fact homiletically it would not be incorrect to trace both the covenant and the commandment back to Sinai, since that mountain was the site of a major development in covenant theology.

Pastoral Reflections

A renowned pianist comes to dinner in your home. You have told some of your friends that she is coming, and they are all very impressed. You do have a grand piano in your living room, but it has not been touched for years since the children found they had other interests. You call the tuner to make sure it is in top shape for the visit. When your

guest arrives, you enjoy wonderful conversation over the best dinner you had in your recipe box. After dinner you retire to the living room. The famous musician comments on the piano and asks, "Do you mind if I try it?" You answer, "Oh no, tonight you are my guest. I will play for you." Then you sit down to struggle through "Heart and Soul," the same song you have been trying to get right since grade school.

Obviously that is not the way you honor a guest. You accept her offer to play, and you listen, and you keep your hands off the keys.

Well, how would you have felt if your musician guest had refused dinner? What if she had told you, "You shouldn't have gone to the trouble," and suggested you set it aside for leftovers tomorrow and let her run out and pick up some Chinese food? She honors you by accepting the gift of food, and you honor her by accepting the gift of music.

Peter was not about to let Jesus wash his feet. He asked, *Lord, are you going to wash my feet? ...You will never wash my feet.* But that is not the way you honor a guest. If she is a wonderful pianist, you allow her to play. If he is the servant of all, you allow him to wash your feet.

On this evening Jesus' followers gather at the Lord's table. That is how we honor Christ. Of course to truly honor Christ as he deserves, we will remember that we are gathering not only at Christ's table but at his altar. To do less would be tantamount to complimenting our host for a nice appearance of the food on the table, yet to fail to eat and be nourished. We honor Christ as we accept his body and blood at his altar.

We are not good at accepting gifts, and so we fight over the bill at the restaurant. We are poor at receiving compliments and may rudely negate them. We would never want to accept charity. But there comes a time when we cannot pay for what we have received. All we can do is accept and give joyful thanks, or in Greek, *eucharist*.

In seminary one of our older professors told of a suggestion that one of his professors had given him back when he was in seminary. He told him that one of the best things to do when you enter a house for a pastoral visit is to ask for a cigar. (Note that in the 1990s it may be more socially acceptable to ask for a cup of coffee.) Let the people do something for you, in this case something fairly small. Through experience this professor had found the way to honor his host.

Our family visited an animal sanctuary. Some birds of prey were in cages the size of bedrooms. We happened to be there when the caretaker came with their breakfast, some very large meatballs that we would not touch. She tossed one in the door for the American Bald Eagle. We watched as nothing happened. Her explanation was, he is much too cool to look like he needs any handout. After a proper length of wait he came down to consume it all. The caretaker explained further that one day a week, Sunday, they make the predatory birds fast since it is more like their experience in the wild. Then when she tosses in the Monday morning meatball, the eagle forgets about being cool and swoops down immediately for the meal.

Maybe that is a good image for how we ought to approach the altar, like an eagle on Monday morning. We are hungry. We know we are lost without this meal. And we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (second lesson, v. 26). So we come eagerly to accept, and thus honor our host.

We honor Christ in our Communion liturgy from beginning to end. We honor him as we sing the sanctus, echoing the praise of Isaiah in the words, "Holy, Holy, Holy," as well as the words of the crowds on Palm Sunday, "Hosanna in the highest." Some congregations honor Christ through needlepoint kneeling cushions. Many honor him through festal garments, a chasuble

donned only for the time of the Great Thanksgiving at the meal. We honor the One who sent Christ when we elevate the host and sing, "Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen." But our host at the Supper is best honored when in all these things and in eating and drinking, we accept his gift of himself.

Good Friday
April 10, 1998

Psalm 22
Isaiah 52:13–53:12
Hebrews 10:16-25
or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9
John 18:1–19:42

First Reading

Try to listen to the William Tell Overture without thinking of the Lone Ranger. That is the trouble St. Matthew and Martin Luther had trying to read the Old Testament without thinking of Jesus. Since this is read on Good Friday, there is probably no reason to swim against the current of Christian piety, reviewing for the faithful all the various proposed identities for the Suffering Servant. Today we will preach Jesus Christ and him crucified.

God revealed the principle of vicarious atonement long before the death of Christ. Here Isaiah builds on the theology of sacrifice and more particularly on the meaning of the events reenacted each year on the Day of Atonement.

Look at the various attitudes of the three parties in this drama. The people for whom the servant suffers despise him (v. 3). They surmise that his suffering is God's judgment on him (v. 4). The servant's approach to his troubles is complete non-resistance, apparently accepting it all by his own choice rather than by lack of any other option (v. 7). God's *will* is *to crush him with pain* (v. 10), though God's last word, in the same verse, is prosperity both for and through the servant.

It is easy but inaccurate to characterize God's action toward this servant with the words of v. 7, *the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Notice how God prospers and exalts this servant, both at the beginning and at the end of the text.

As well as this Old Testament lesson fits with the Gospel reading, there is one contradiction that probably makes the Isaiah passage more appropriate to read with one of the synoptic passion stories. The Suffering Servant *did not open his mouth* (twice in v. 7). Jesus, on the other hand, opens his mouth regularly and, if not demanding directly that he be crucified, certainly helps move things along in that direction.

In the opening betrayal scene, Jesus steps forward to identify himself. Judas just stands there with his mouth hanging open, neither speaking nor kissing (v. 5).

Sandwiched in the middle of the three denials by Peter, Jesus by contrast proclaims before the high priest that he never made any secret about his identity. He speaks so boldly that one of the police strikes him in the face for his lack of respect.

Jesus is no more respectful to Pilate. In v. 9 Jesus does keep his mouth momentarily closed, refusing to answer Pilate's question, a little reminiscent of the Servant in Isaiah, but it only shows that Pilate has no power to even guide the conversation. It provides opportunity for Jesus to put Pilate in his place, telling him that even this power Pilate holds over Jesus was given to Pilate *from above* (19:11).

Once the crucifixion is underway, there is less for Jesus to say. He makes sure that his mother is cared for, fulfills Scripture by

asking for a drink, and announces almost dispassionately, not with a loud voice, *It is finished.* Christ was not the victim, but has done his work.

The words *I thirst* and *It is finished* are of one piece in the narrative. They come because *Jesus knew that all was now finished* (v. 28). At the beginning of the narrative, Jesus instigates the action *knowing all that was to happen to him* (18:4). Jesus did not just put two and two together. He ordered it.

Pastoral Reflections

After being imprisoned for three decades, new evidence surfaces, a new trial is ordered, and the innocent goes free. Vicarious suffering, whether willingly or not, still occurs. If the sufferer is unwilling, it is a perversion of justice (v. 8). If the sufferer is willing, it becomes an act of mercy.

Follow Peter's experience of the passion. As much as Jesus was in control, so Peter was floundering for what to do and say, consistently making the wrong choices, and finally disappearing to either watch from the distance or close his eyes, expecting the worst. When animals are frightened they resort to the "fight-flight" defense. Peter makes vain attempts at both.

When Jesus stands in the garden telling the soldiers, *If you are looking for me, let these men go* (18:8). Peter flails with his sword injuring a slave. Later he is trying to look inconspicuous in the courtyard of the high priest. He protects his cover with denials. When the cock crows, Peter ceases to be a part of the passion story. Even when timid Nicodemus is brave enough to help with the burial, Peter still cannot be found. The story is one of a powerful Jesus who faces our enemies for us. The power of religion and state gone bad are no difficulty for him. Then Jesus faces death, something that would push us to fight or flight.

Because of the length of this text, it may be best after the long reading to preach on only a portion of it. One obvious choice would be 19:25b-30 encompassing the three words of Jesus from the cross.

Jesus' concern for his mother, in the middle of his own pain, reminds me of my own father's final days. The pain of the cancer had spread through his whole body. He never complained about it. In the hospital I leaned over his bed to help him turn. Knowing I had experienced minor back problems, he asked me, "How's your back, Wally?" At the end, Jesus remembered his mother and us.

As Jesus speaks the last two words and demonstrates his control of all that is transpiring, the preacher may choose, for contrast, to help hearers recall that awful feeling of being out of control. It happens when their job is in danger, when the stakes are high for salary and self-respect. It happens during child raising, when the stakes are even higher, as teens threaten to go their own rebellious way. Grave illness of themselves or loved ones has left many of the hearers feeling out of control. Perhaps too poignant for some hearers is a situation of danger of violence. Jesus showed none of the fear that these situations evoke in us, but continued forward with the story his Father had written. Jesus knew what was happening to us as he died.

The company that comes to hear the passion story is far smaller than the crowd that will hear the Easter story on Sunday. Perhaps that is appropriate, considering the small group who showed up for the crucifixion itself. Could it be that the others avoid Good Friday worship because they think it is bad news? If it were not Good News, Christ would not have ordered it. The faithful who come to hear the story again know this secret, and so they come to listen as you preach Christ crucified.

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