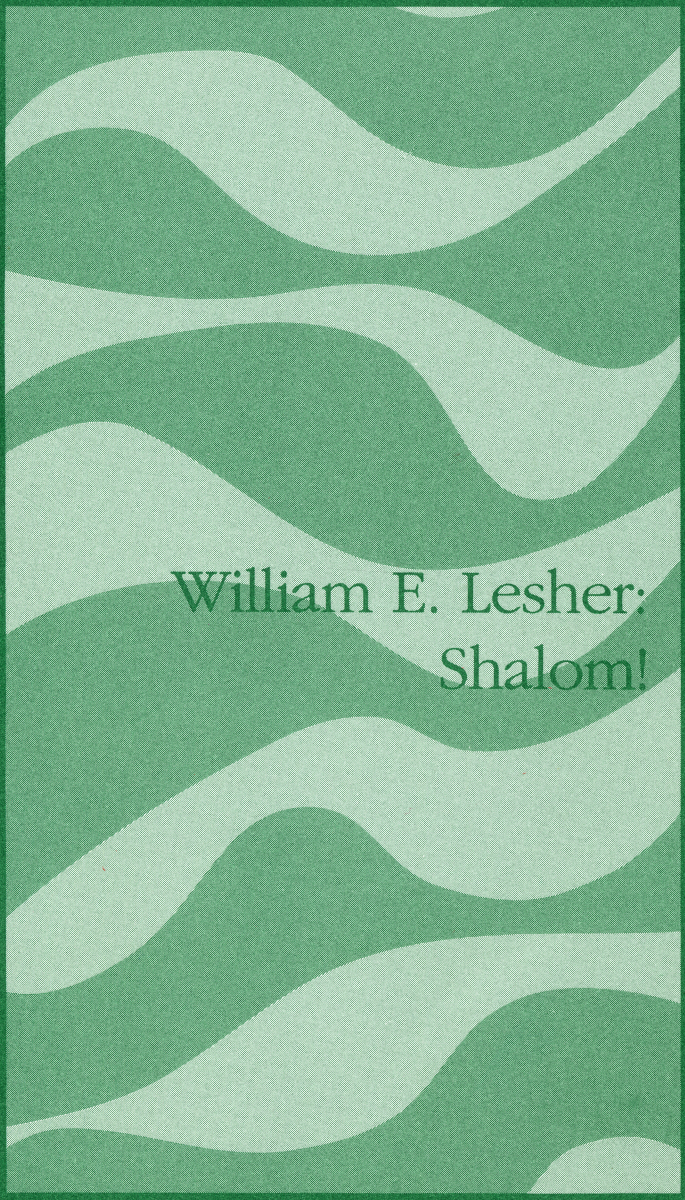
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William E. Lesher: Shalom!

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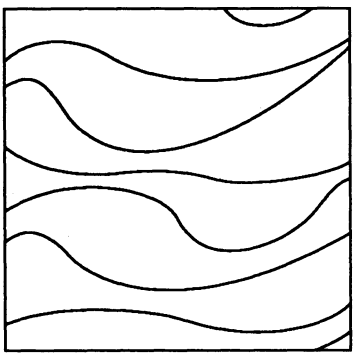
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William E. Lesher: Shalom!

The essays by LSTC faculty members in this issue are written to celebrate and honor William E. Lesher on the occasion of his retirement from his nineteen-year presidency of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and they offer an outline of what mission and ministry should be in the twenty-first century.

The Hebrew word "Shalom" has been the way Bill has signed his letters for years, and this greeting embodies all his leadership means for reconciliation, wholeness, joy, and affirmation of the whole world and all of creation. In good and in challenging times, he has called the seminary and the whole church to seek the peace of the city, to recognize that ministerial leadership requires the best of our thinking about the faith, and to take full measure of the fact that in Christ the dividing walls of partition have indeed been broken down.

Mark Bangert notes that the Te Deum originated in the early centuries of the Christian church, found its way into Matins by the sixth century, and now takes its place in Morning Prayer in the LBW. The Te Deum has been known for three quarters of Christian history, in many musical settings, and enjoys enduring popularity. The article discusses how Daniel Kallman composed his own Te Deum to fit the mission and ministry of LSTC and the musicians available to it (including a Concert and a Gospel choir), using a plethora of musical styles. His work mixes three languages, not to mention the use of classical music styles, gospel, Hispanic folk spiritual, and jazz. Kallman's Te Deum shows a way of preserving the integrity of diversity while providing opportunity to explore that diversity within a larger context that holds out the promise that new linkages of disparate voices are in fact possible.

Kathleen D. Billman explores the grief and hope involved in saying goodbye. Grievers experience a shattered world, often existing in a state of unreality. They also have an altered relationship to time and need to reenter the present and the future. A change due to grief in one part of their lives affects the entire fabric of life, and grievers are challenged to decide that relearning the

world, without a lost loved one, is loyalty rather than betrayal. A helpful resource in this process is the Psalter, with its psalms of orientation (confidence and trust), disorientation (laments), and reorientation (declarative hymns). Only grief permits real newness.

Richard Bliese believes that theology and mission must acknowledge the marriage between the global and local (the glocal) or risk missing the true nature of the world context in which we are called to do mission. Globalization refers to the compression of the world into a single place and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. While the church can respond to globalization in a traditional, prophetic, or revisionist way, it does so in the context of religious individualism and relativism. Five areas are often listed as the church's response to globalization: mission and evangelism, ecumenism, interfaith dialogue, cross-cultural ministry, and issues dealing with peace, justice, and ecology. The universalizing and particularizing tendencies within the churches throughout the world suggest "catholicity" as the term theologically equivalent to globalization. A global confessionalism can unite the church in and for "glocal" mission in response to the various forces of globalization around the world.

Robert Conrad reports on a recent survey of how congregations prepare people for membership, with strategies ranging from one Sunday morning session to twenty weeks! If today's disciples are to be lifelong followers of Jesus in good times and bad, teaching and learning must be a vital part of their lives. The congregations with short adult membership classes put more attention on doing than believing, but all congregations need to engage all members in lifelong learning and service in order to create disciples, and not just members. The adult catechumenate is the most extensive and intensive model of preparation for membership in the church, but it may not be applicable in all congregations. If there is no consistent follow-up with new members, they may not become "disciples," and they may be more prone to drop out.

Philip Hefner contends that the community of unconditional belonging is a basic element of our current cultural situation and will be the criterion by which the church's ministry will be evaluated. The question is not how we survive this present, but how the present can become the matrix of God's enablement for our future. Multiculturality is both a moral and an ecclesiastical mandate, and related to it are the imperatives of social justice and the common good. Our identity as church is interwoven with this society; here we act out our hope for the future. The Lutheran tradition exhibits a concern that the inclusive community be gathered around the truth of the faith, but the ELCA finds itself

increasingly alienated from the poor. Our expectation should be that a macrocosm of the society should be gathered around our altars. Truth in the Lutheran church is threatened by accommodation to the particular cultures of those who hold power in our society. Homogeneous communities cannot proclaim and practice "belonging without conditions." Belonging across boundaries points us to the truth that our communities of homogeneity cannot define the length and breadth of our humanity.

Kurt Hendel points out that Luther presented his most focused articulation of the theology of the cross in the Heidelberg Theses of 1518. The theology of the cross is primarily a theology of justification and offers a sharp contrast to a theology of glory. The theologian of glory, according to Luther, calls evil good and good evil, but the theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is. Both God's alien and God's proper work are done for the same gracious purpose, namely, to save. The theologian of the cross focuses on the incarnate Christ suffering the shame and humiliation of the cross and in that hidden revelation recognizes God and God's will for humanity. Luther maintains that people are able to hear the good and freeing news of the gospel only when they cease to be theologians of glory, become aware of their sinfulness and helplessness, and recognize and admit that they cannot be their own savior. A theology for the twenty-first century must be realistic about the human condition, clarify the divine-human relationship, bring freedom, and be life-giving and life-sustaining.

Ralph W. Klein considers three test cases when Israel's relationship with its neighbors was characterized by ambivalence, ambiguity, and a courageous hope that would not settle for the status quo. Jonah offers readers of all ages a choice between a theology of repentance or a theology of compassion when relating to the nations. The story of Dinah in Genesis 34 leaves readers with two powerful arguments, one for inter-ethnic marriage and one opposed to it. Readers must rethink the faith and then make a choice. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah in general make peace with the Persian empire as long as it allows their temple and their religious life to flourish. But a minority voice in Nehemiah 9 demanded and expected divine intervention to correct a Persian system he or she clearly viewed as oppressive. Daring spirits recognize that God's greatest gift is the transcendence of all cultural, ethnic, political, and religious boundaries.

Edgar Krentz shows that Roman cities typically included a large number of gods and religions while early Christians were particularistic, advocating service to one God alone. Paul must have appeared exclusivist to the non-

Christian population of Corinth as well as to his Christian colleagues. But he is also known for his attempts to be all things to all people. Even as a missionary to the gentiles he recognized the special blessings the Jewish people had received from God. He did not advocate a supercessionist position and insisted that Abraham received the promise to be the father of many nations before he was circumcised. Paul's gospel inclusivity wipes out the major distinctions that ran through ancient society. Paul not only preached the leveling power of the gospel; he lived it. The boundary to personal liberty is the death of Christ on behalf of the weakest, poorest, most marginalized person. It is precisely his commitment to the universal gospel that effectively makes him open and adaptable to different groups of people.

Albert Pero, Jr. asks how Christians externalize their identity as the church of God and how they exercise power. While Lutherans often talk about the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as the basis for authority, all too much of this discussion has been monocultural and uttered by only representatives of one of the genders. The Word of God is the norm by which the laity, bishops, and teachers are to be judged, and this word comes to us in law and gospel. Any theological issue, including the question of power/authority, must take the multicultural context into consideration. We need to declare a moratorium on western domination in the field of ecclesiology and theology. The normative tradition for African-American people is tradition governed by the principle of non-racism, incarnated in the black Christian tradition. Failure to affirm the full humanity of other persons is the root cause of almost every social problem. God's continued grace is needed if we are to triumph over evil in the world.

Richard J. Perry, Jr. demonstrates that the debate between assimilation (Booker T. Washington) or separation (W. E. B. Du Bois) continues to pose a dilemma for African Americans. Should African American Lutherans assimilate with Euro-American Lutherans or form a separate organization? Or should they do both? The history of African American Lutheranism should be required study for all future leaders. The presuppositions of all theological and ethical thought need to be examined for their racial, gender, and class bias. Theological education must be in solidarity with those who are seeking to transform society through assimilation and separation.

David Rhoads notes that the New Testament can assist in environmental ministry despite its lack of creation stories and extended passages about the natural world, and despite its occasional dualism. Mark portrays the arrival of the kingdom of God as a restoration of human creation and of all creation. Followers of Christ participate in the restoration of creation—either coming

into harmony with nature or having authority to overcome its threat. Romans asserts that when human beings become righteous, they will treat the rest of creation in such a way that all creation will thrive. Colossians helps us to see our need for a Christology that addresses both human fallenness and the fallenness of all creation. If we are able to repent and create a sustainable life together for future generations on the earth, the results will constitute a transformation that might in some sense represent God's salvation for the human race. The lifestyles of the early Christians can serve as models for carrying out our own environmental responsibilities.

Barbara Rossing argues that it is more important to encourage all worshipers to eat and drink—even if this means offering grape juice—than it is to mandate wine as the only drink at holy communion. She notes that the New Testament refers to the "cup" rather than to the contents of the cup and that the alcohol content of wine in the first century was considerably less than today. The New Testament is insistent that everyone partake in the supper by eating and drinking, whereas a proposed ELCA document favors communing under one element by those who cannot drink wine. Paul does not extend the argument "one body, therefore one bread" to the cup. The real question is how we will offer full eucharistic hospitality to parishioners who cannot drink wine. Pastoral compassion is leading more and more ELCA congregations—almost 60%—now to offer a non-alcoholic alternative to wine. Insistence on "wine only" gives far greater emphasis to wine than can be justified on biblical or pastoral grounds.

Vítor Westhelle outlines the changed world circumstances that call for profound changes in theological education. The inability of theology to agree on the questions is a mark of current times when confessional communions are severed from each other and when diversity grows within these communions. Most Christians are now found in the Third World, and many of these churches offer different understandings of the human condition and different interpretations of the meaning of Christian doctrines. In the Roman Catholic tradition, theological education is clearly subservient to the church while in the Protestant heritage the theologian is able to regain the textual meaning of the narrative through scholarship and devotion. For the Orthodox, the immediate exposure to the icon, in which the epiphany dwells, yields the theological content of the tradition. Choosing one of these options is now no longer a self-evident assumption. Theology is a heteroglot practice of people naming their relationship to God and the world, and asking how theology is being done when it is done. The article closes with a proposal with regard to the contextual, constructive, and catechetical fields of theological education.

I first met Bill Lesher in Berkeley, in 1977, when I was teaching summer school at PLTS, where he then served as president. Little did I realize how much my life would be shaped by the man who generously shared wine and cheese with me in his living room. Six years later, he and John H. Tietjen pulled off the deployment that brought nine other Christ Seminary-Seminex professors and me to join the LSTC faculty in Chicago; we were in many ways a foretaste of the ELCA and the transition to this new setting was seamless. For the last nine years I have been Dean at LSTC, responsible for the academic administration of this place and accountable to—and empowered by—a leader who kept all the plates spinning and all the troops happy and energized.



If I have not yet plumbed the depth of the grieving his departure will bring to me personally, I also know that none of us has yet heard the last of his ventures in globalization, nor will anyone soon be able to match, let alone clone, the boundless energy for new projects and the expansive vision for theological education he discovered in the gospel. Relearning the world of theological education in his absence is an act of loyalty to him—and the least he would expect from us.

He never tires of quoting Dag Hammerskjöld: "For all that has been, Thanks. For all that will be, Yes."

שלום

Ralph W. Klein

Editor

A School of Te Deums

Mark Bangert
Christ Seminary–Seminex Professor of Worship and Church Music
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

If you have more than one Te Deum, how do you identify them collectively? A bevy of Te Deums? A gaggle of Te Deums? A flock of Te Deums? A litter of Te Deums? A school of Te Deums?

Surrounding the 25th anniversary year of the Lutheran School of Theology in 1992-1993 two large scale musical settings of the Te Deum were mounted by the Chorus of LSTC together with the Gospel Choir of LSTC and supporting instrumentalists. In the spring of 1992 the LSTC Chorus launched these book-end musical events with Handel's Dettingen Te Deum, a 45-minute work which is known in the trade as a "warhorse," because it is frequently brought to life for occasions calling for acknowledgment of divine good will in human affairs. The piece is so well-known that it hardly needs written commentary. But for those who don't know the Dettingen Te Deum but do know his Messiah, suffice it to say that Handel displays in the Te Deum that recognizable skill of writing brilliantly and compellingly in the Baroque style. One leaves the work convinced that Handel has successfully invited us into a trumpeting of God's reign over all the evil forces in this world.

But Handel's work is not the subject here. The second of the two Te Deums is. In the spring of 1993 the LSTC Chorus and Gospel Choir and instrumentalists premiered the Te Deum of Daniel Kallman, a young Minnesota composer who agreed to take on a commission from LSTC to write a work which reflects the multicultural mission and life of LSTC. The story of how that commission came about, how many individuals and organizations financially supported its birth, how members of both choirs learned how to work together with long rehearsals in the midst of busy academic schedules, how it was received by the ecclesiastical and musical communities—all of that could receive a fuller treatment sometime. Here the purpose is to show how the Kallman work, in addition to its unique innovations, commands attention as a new member of the grand gallery of Te Deums written over the centuries.

Te Deum: origins and fortunes

When the English overcame the French in a 1743 battle at Dettingen, it seemed only natural—at least to the English troops—to celebrate this victory with a Te Deum. More recent evaluations of the military conflict suggest a less enthusiastic evaluation of the battle's significance, but recognize that the impulse to Te Deum was quite normal. Twenty-six years earlier, in 1717, Johannes Kuhnau, predecessor of Bach at St. Thomas in Leipzig, wrote a grand Te Deum for the 200th anniversary of the Reformation. Military victories, ordinations of priests and

bishops, political events, church anniversaries have all entertained the impulse to Te Deum.

Why this fascination with the Te Deum? The text is very old, first of all. During and beyond the middle ages common wisdom had it that the text of the Te Deum was improvised by St. Ambrose and St. Augustine at the latter's baptism by Ambrose in Milan in 387. Phrases from the established text appear as early as the year 235. Bishop Cyprian from Toulon ordered in 530 that the Te Deum should be used daily in all Christian churches, though the first full extant text of the Te Deum is contained in the Bangor Antiphonary from about 690.[1] In a 1958 study of the Te Deum, Ernst Kähler proposes after a thorough analysis of the text that it originated before the middle of the fourth century as the Preface, Sanctus and Proper Preface of an old Latin Mass of the Easter Vigil from the environs of Gaul and Spain.[2]

Secondly, it was a well-known text among the clerics and religious. By the middle of the sixth century many monastic orders introduced the Te Deum into the nightly prayer office now called Matins where it has held a place of honor at the end of the service on Sundays and Feast Days excluding Advent and Lent. Anyone who used that office would thus know the text well. Luther knew it well and translated it as one of his hymns.[3] The canticle also found its way into Lutheran versions of Matins there appearing in Latin or in the vernacular. So it has also taken its place in Morning Prayer from the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.[4]

A third reason for its popularity is its succinct way of incarnating Christian inclinations to offer praise. This it manages to do via creedal-like utterances which get to the heart of Trinitarian activity in this world. These condensed utterances compel one to affirm that peculiar understanding of orthodoxy as "straight praise, the ability to offer worthy praise through rehearsals of God's involvement in the world." Kähler's analysis of the text yields three distinct sections:

1. Verses 1-13: Praise of the Father ("You are God... Holy Spirit, advocate and guide").[5] This section contains a quote from the Sanctus of Holy Communion and concludes with a Trinitarian doxology.

2. Verses 14-19: A Christological hymn of praise (You, Christ... and be our judge").

3. Verses 20-21: A petition constructed from verse 11 of Psalm 28. While these verses are now understood to conclude the Te Deum, the traditional form of the canticle included several other similar petitions all taken from the psalms. The Te Deum thus concluded with the words "O Lord, in you have I trusted, let me never be confounded."[6]

Music for the Te Deum was at first in a chant style though written sources for such chant date only from the twelfth century. Interest-

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[1] *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik.* S.v. "Te Deum," by Karl-Heinz Schlager.

[2] *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.* S.v. "Te Deum," by Ruth Steiner.

[3] Martin Luther, *Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. Ulrich S. Leupold, vol. 53 of *Luther's Works American Edition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 171-75.

[4] *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1978), 139-41.

[5] Here, as in Kallman's version of the text, the translation from the Latin is that from the English Language Liturgical Commission, as contained in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, 139-41.

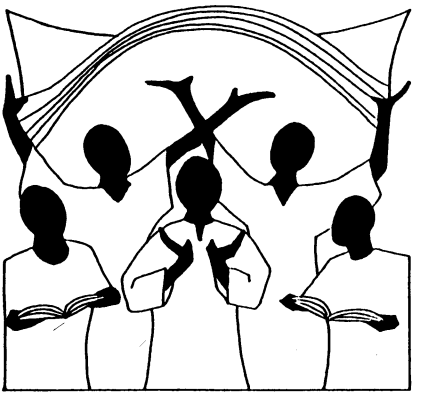
[6] The abrupt conclusion to the older version of the canticle has long challenged composers to construct a fitting climax to their settings.

ingly, these sources and those from subsequent centuries provide only one chant melody for the canticle, though throughout there are variations in detail. Such unanimity suggests that the one melody might be quite old, possibly having roots coexistent with the origins of the text. The style of the chant melody is a mixture of syllabic (one note per syllable) and neumatic (two or three notes per syllable) with occasional melismas (many notes per syllable) such as at the word "Sanctus" (Holy).

Further analysis of the melody indicates that it is not through-composed but rather psalmodic; that is, reciting tones carry a good part of the text with small melodic formulas that lead into and away from the reciting tone. In the first section of the canticle, phrases begin with the ascending notes: E-G-A (an interval of a minor third, followed by a major second) which together inscribe the interval of a perfect fourth (E-A). When Luther translated the Te Deum into German he fitted his translation to the old chant melody, also using this melodic curve, though the peculiarities of German led him to make necessary adjustments at other places in the melodic structure.

The single line chant setting for the Te Deum survived alongside the introduction of polyphony into the church's music during the ninth and tenth centuries. Luther's own work on the canticle attests to that. However, records indicate that beginning with the tenth century festive performances of the Te Deum chant included instruments and bells suggesting too the use of improvised polyphony. Extant written polyphonic settings of the Te Deum date from the fourteenth century. Most consist of the chant melody with simple harmony surrounding it.

There are few settings from the fifteenth century, but existing sixteenth-century settings (c. 70) indicate a continuing strong interest in the canticle. Some of these compositions come from the pens of Lutheran notables, e.g. Johann Walter (Luther's musical friend) and George Rhau, printer and composer in Wittenberg.



The next century witnessed a proliferation of polyphonic Te Deums, due no doubt to its shared popularity with the Magnificat, the major canticle from Vespers. For example, Lutheran composer Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) wrote seven Te Deums using Luther's hymnic version as the base. Others of his contemporaries composed organ settings which were to be used as alternate verses of the canticle when the choir alone was singing it. Such a practice probably prompted Bach to write his own organ setting of Luther's version.

With the advent of the late Baroque style polyphonic settings of the Te Deum show some structural change. Contemporary propensities to utilize brilliant brass fanfare to greet both monarch and God were given clear invitation by the Te Deum text. The emergence of the solo voice in recitative and aria suggested to composers new ways of treating various parts of the text. Handel's two settings are complemented by works by

the French Lully (1632-1687) and the Italian Benevoli (1605-1672). Later came settings (six in all) from Michael Haydn (1737-1806), Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), Mozart (1756-1791), Berlioz (1855), Bruckner (1885), Dvorak (1896), Verdi (1898), Kodaly (1936), G. Raphael (1930), F. Peeters (1945), Reda (1950), and Pepping (1956). It is clear that the Te Deum text has challenged composers throughout the centuries.

Yet, the concerted versions are only part of the story. For many Lutherans today there are persisting memories of the Anglican Chant settings of the canticle which appeared as part of Matins in both the *Service Book and Hymnal* and *The Lutheran Hymnal*. While not as popular, the Te Deum from Morning Prayer of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* invites similar familiarity.

A text of solid praise, therefore, which coextends nearly three quarters of Christian history, a large family of divergent settings each a voice from its own time and place, and a currency among contemporary Christian worshipers made attractive a decision to help mark the 25th anniversary of LSTC in Hyde Park with a newly-composed Te Deum.

Kallman commission

Empowered by a major grant from the Benefaction Fund of Pilgrim Lutheran Church in Indianapolis as well as by gifts from the Seminary Guild, supportive individuals, and the Meet the Composer/Midwest Foundation, LSTC sought to commission a Te Deum which by its very concept and structure began to express the praise which the canticle embodies. In a proposal made to Meet the Composer/Midwest the envisioned work was described:

> This work is meant to invite appropriate thanksgiving from all in attendance, reflect LSTC's unique multicultural situation and mission, and make available distinguished new musical material for further usage by ensembles of all kinds.[7]

> In one sense the project sought to transcend chasms which exist between races and classes.

Later in that same document the "unique multicultural situation" appears in greater detail:

> LSTC has 23 international students, an Hispanic Ministries program, a Center for Global Mission, a study program in Zimbabwe... all of which are outgrowths of its mission. The Te Deum is to emerge from that matrix [by incorporating] the creative linkage of a variety of musical tongues and systems. [Among other characteristics it should] be written for two choirs, one focused on more traditional music, and one dedicated to Gospel music.[8]

Large-scale concerted settings of the church's canticles often incorporated two or more styles of composition. Bach, for instance, employed the renaissance motet form for one of the movements from his otherwise quite Baroque Magnificat in D. The kind of proposal outlined above goes way beyond such practices, however, especially since the idioms envisioned as somehow linked in this new work represent quite

[7] *Application Form for MTC Grant* (October 1992), p. 2.

[8] Ibid, p. 3.

divergent social groupings. In one sense the project sought to transcend chasms which exist between races and classes. Where does one find a composer who is willing to try such a feat, much more have the skills to accomplish it?

Through a lead provided by Rodney Shrank of MorningStar Music Publishers, administrators of this project contacted Daniel Kallman from Northfield, Minnesota, who after considerable discussion accepted the commission. In many ways he came to this assignment with the skills and attitude it demanded.

> Among his compositions are commissions from the Minnesota Orchestra, Plymouth Music Series with Phillip Brunelle, Minneapolis Chamber Symphony, and music for the closing ceremonies of the 1991 International Special Olympics. He has worked on concert and recording projects with Garrison Keillor including recordings of "Lake Wobegon Days" and "Songs of the Cat" with Keillor and Frederica von Stade. He has also written extensively for worship, including hymns and liturgical music.[9]

In a letter which describes the composer's own pre-compositional vision of the Te Deum, Kallman writes:

> I have agreed to compose an extended work which will ultimately reflect LSTC's unique multicultural opportunities.... The instrumentation will be unique in that the ensemble must be versatile to incorporate various musical idioms from jazz to "legit" to gospel to other current ethnic styles.
>
> ...The composition will consist of several movements, including choral settings (by the choirs separately and combined) as well as solos, duets, and other vocal combinations with varied accompaniments. At your suggestion, I will be using the Latin hymn of praise Te Deum as the textual foundation of the work, and I will be interspersing English texts throughout to accentuate or reflect on the meaning of the Latin. The non-Latin portions of the composition will consist of traditional spiritual texts in new musical settings and also adaptations of existing tunes. I plan on incorporating at least one new hymn of praise which will be sung by the performers and audience together. The overall sense of the work will be one of joyous celebration of the diversity of cultures in America, with the ultimate goal of glorifying God and fostering a deeper understanding and respect for the traditions of each culture.[10]

Kallman Te Deum in analysis

While an amateur recording was made of the premier performance, copies of the tape are not readily available, making it necessary here to rely upon verbal descriptions. With those it should be possible both to appreciate how Kallman worked out his initial visions of the composition and to acknowledge his Te Deum as a worthy partner among the acclaimed concerted settings of the canticle.

As indicated above, Kallman's Te Deum is scored for two choirs (Concert and Gospel), two vocal soloists, strings, soprano, alto and tenor sax, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, two trumpets (doubling on fluegelhorn), two trombones, tuba, percussion (two players on a wide variety of instruments, including maracas, tambourine, cowbell, guiro, and congas), piano, organ, and synthesizer.

Like most other concerted settings of the Te Deum, Kallman's work is multisectional with ten distinct musical movements.

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[9] "Director's Notes," Program for the April 25, 1993, premier performance.

[10] Daniel Kallman to Mark Bangert, 1 October 1992.

I. Prelude/Te Deum Laudamus/Sanctus. A Bartok-sounding Prelude employing strings, winds, brass, and percussion leads into a pulsating ground bass over which the concert choir sings the opening phrases of the canticle in Latin. The syncopated lines of the concert choir are soon commented upon by the Gospel choir singing in English the word "Praise." A climax is reached when both choirs in unison sing "Holy." This sends both groups into impromptu-like dialog on the word "Holy," including improvisation from soloists vocal and instrumental. The movement thus concludes with a jazzy Gospel flavor.

II. Misterioso: The Glorious Company. In contrast to what has just occurred, this movement proceeds without a distinct sense of pulse, instead advancing in a recitative style with successions of interesting vertical tonalities. The concert choir offers three phrases of the canticle now in English, two of which are followed by a short commentary from the Gospel choir each consisting of excerpts from well-known spirituals: after "apostles praise you" comes: "John saw the number that no man could number;" after "fellowship of the prophets" comes "Go down, Moses." Then, the movement comes to a conclusion with the words "white-robed army of martyrs praise you." But the mystery of the church is not left to include only those who have gone before; to make the point Kallman adds a major insertion to the text with the next movement.

III. Meditatively: Los Martires (The Martyrs). This Hispanic folk spiritual serves as commentary on the third phrase from the previous movement. It is to be sung in Spanish by a soloist accompanying himself on guitar while the orchestra provides delicate decoration and basic rhythm. The text of the song centers on those "lives that have been sacrificed in the name of Jesus," asking that we might be "willing and ready to follow you, as they followed you." In his shaping of this plaintive yet lyrical piece Kallman draws attention to the text, "We remember them before you now," a phrase which is then picked up the choirs. Several repetitions of the phrase enable members of the choirs to speak out the names of contemporary martyrs.

IV. Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise. The familiar hymn is set in motion by spoken text. At the conclusion of the touching folk spiritual comprising the prior movement a choir member abruptly shouts these words in rhythm: "Throughout the whole world the holy church acclaims you!" The Hispanic flavor continues as dance rhythms energize the orchestra's accompaniment of the three stanzas of the hymn. The choirs sing in unison in a three-beat rhythm while the orchestra functions in a two-beat rhythm. Above it all a lively countermelody is tossed from one instrumentalist to another. Between stanzas two and three Kallman specifies a "group percussion jam" asking various choir members to join with cowbell, maracas, guiro, and tambourine. Instrumental ritornellos surround the third stanza with the last of these concluding rather quietly.

V. Slowly, Freely: Father of majesty, unbounded. A doxology ("Father of majesty... Holy Spirit, advocate and guide") concludes the first section of the Te Deum text. Employing a paraphrase of those phrases Kallman moves through several keys, beginning in F# major, ending in Bb minor, and visiting G major and G minor along the way—as if to comment upon the unity and distinctions of the Trinity. An alto soloist from the Gospel choir begins this section, and the melodic material she offers is soon given to the Gospel choir for a

Kallman moves through several keys, beginning in F# major, ending in Bb minor... as if to comment upon the unity and distinctions of the Trinity.

joyous romp through the paraphrased stanzas. "Unbounded" drives this outburst of praise. After the second stanza (whose subject is Jesus) various instrumentalists are invited to improvise—first on the bass, then the synthesizer, sax, and drums. Following the third stanza (Holy Spirit), the concert choir joins, all now making a reprise on the word "Holy" which brings the movement to a large and impressive conclusion.

VI. Maestoso: Tu Rex gloriae. A return to the Latin text ("You, Christ, are the King of Glory, the eternal Son of the Father") brings also a return to the recitative style noted in movement II. The concert choir in unison makes musical acclamation interspersed with fanfares from the brass. Again and again the choir sings "Christe" as a kind of recurring plea. For a moment Kallman introduces the choir to a renaissance technique of imitative polyphony on the words "Tu patris sempiternus" ("eternal Son of the Father"). The orchestra then picks up the "Christe" plea sung earlier by the choir, leaving the last plea, however, to the choir, the movement ending with a solitary note sung by the sopranos on the word "sempiternus."

VII. Larghetto: When you took our flesh. That solitary note continues as if in eternity, but is at an opportune time placed into a lovely 3/4 cradle song introduced by the strings. A soprano soloist from the concert choir joins the ensemble singing this new text which has been given a carol-like tune; her song is soon provided with a countermelody from the clarinet and flute. Kallman gives the soloist's melody to the choir, and the movement ends with one more reference to "sempiternus," sung slowly and touchingly on a full, quiet, consonant F-major chord.

VIII. Moderate Swing, not too fast: Mary Had a Baby, Yes, Lord. The Gospel choir provides commentary with this traditional spiritual text. Kallman honors the African roots of Gospel music by shaping the spiritual as a call/response form. Successive measures of 7/4 break down into 4/4 (call) and 3/4 (choir: "Yes, Lord"), all richly supported by the reeds, brass, and rhythm sections. Improvisatory-like vocals center on phrases like "See the Baby, Look, the Baby" and "The people keep a comin' an' the train done gone." Setting up expectations with that last phrase, Kallman ends the movement with one seeming last utterance, but instead of the word "gone" he directs a male voice to shout:

IX. You overcame the sting of death/Come, Lord, your people save. "Gone is the sting of death." With these spoken words the solo speaker introduces the concluding movement of the Te Deum text itself. Full orchestra offers the "Christe" plea from an earlier movement, repeats it, and both choirs in unison affirm "You overcame the sting of

death." Abruptly the pulsating ground bass from the first movement appears over which the concert choir sings its Latin "Te Deum" again. Meanwhile, solo voices from the Gospel choir speak remaining phrases from the text, e.g. "You are seated at God's right hand," these phrases piling up in intensity and volume, the concert choir joining this crowd of random shouts. All leads into an introduction to the hymn during which the audience is asked to stand in order to join the choirs, soloists, and orchestra. The hymn is a metricized paraphrase of the last words of the Te Deum ("Come then, Lord, and save your people"). The ensemble puts a tag on the hymn which consists of repetitions of phrases from the hymn and a climactic "Amen."

X. Gospel Swing (easy, not rushed): Postlude/Praise Mosaic. The concluding intercession of the Te Deum text prompts textual commentary, newly created for this Te Deum, and shared musically by the choirs in a Gospel style. Accompaniment is sparse.

And when we finally lay down our sorrows
And we enter that great and promised land,
Then we'll raise up the chorus of loud "Amen"
And forever with Jesus we'll walk hand in hand.

And when you finally take us up to glory
Oh, they say that we'll shine just like the sun.
Then with loved ones and angels and all the hosts of heaven
We'll shout, that you are the Holy One.

This leads into a final section simply subtitled by Kallman as "Exuberantly." Additional new text shapes this "Praise Mosaic."

Then we'll sing praise, praise
We're singin' praise to God on high.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.

These three lines form a refrain or choral/instrumental ritornello which always flows into various "verses." The verses consist of quotes from spirituals, instrumental and vocal solos, and even an eleven-measure classical fugue for the strings. The coda recalls the "Holy" music from the first movement, builds to a climax for which the last sound from the choirs is a spoken "Praise."

With this work Kallman has surely explored new musical territories. In that sense the piece is truly contemporary, even as it is full of moments which musically construct the various energies, relationships, and beliefs that move the church today. But Kallman's Te Deum also shows awareness of and acknowledgment of those musical visions which have accompanied its history through the generations.

1. Opening measures of the Kallman Te Deum feature brass fanfares which track the centuries-long practice of announcing the festive nature of this text with festive instrumentation.

2. First choral sounds in the whole piece are unison and outline the interval of a fourth: E-F#-A, the major second and minor third mirrored here from their placement in the old Te Deum melody.

3. The introduction of glosses in the form of hymns and Gospel songs follows a practice utilized by Bach and his predecessors to introduce the people's song into their compositions; this technique achieves particular poignancy when the audience is invited to sing along at one of these moments.

4. While the piece is always tonal (in a contemporary sense), a definite nod to older notions of tonality as consonance occurs in the lush F-major chord at the conclusion of movement VII.

5. Occasional foreign language interjections, e.g. in movement VII with the words "Res miranda" and in the same move-

ment with the word "Alleluia," place this carol-like section among the historic carols from England and Germany which also employ this practice of mixing language.

6. Particularly in movement IV, accompaniment figures mix two pulses per measure with three pulses per measure, a characteristic of Hispanic music. Kallman here honors that tradition as he honors other traditions such as his adept writing in the Gospel style.

7. Composers often recognize their esteemed predecessors with quotes, e.g. Liszt's variations on Bach's "Weinen, Klagen, und Sorgen." One clear example of that in the Te Deum is the short fugue for the strings in the final movement. Kallman amply demonstrates his ability at writing in a fugual style but chooses as his theme a quote from the last movement of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 4.

These things place Kallman firmly in the tradition. By contrast, it is impossible to describe adequately all that is new in this work. As a beginning one can note the daring mixture of at least three languages in a single work, and the even more daring mixture of classic styles with Gospel, Hispanic folk spiritual, and jazz which together reflect the panoply of musical styles that surrounds contemporary humans. It could be asked whether those mixtures create any kind of synthesis or whether their presence in this work simply demonstrates a kind of coexistence of diversity so typical of contemporary life. Such questions have profound implications for life within and outside the church. Kallman's Te Deum shows a way of preserving the integrity of diversity while providing opportunity to explore that diversity within a larger context, which here holds out the promise that new linkages of seeming disparate voices are in fact possible.

It is no accident that this work is dedicated to William Lesher. His tireless efforts at discovering unity among the diverse liturgical and theological voices of contemporary Lutherans are in a real way incarnated through the Kallman work. His efforts and his gifts offered so liberally over the years of his tenure as president of LSTC are in themselves a living Te Deum. With the Handel and Kallman works, that makes three. And then there is the concert of students who, prompted by his song, have gone into the church singing confidently and blessedly.

William Lesher's gifts, offered so liberally over the years of his tenure as president of LSTC, are in themselves a living Te Deum.

Without a doubt, more than one Te Deum is a School of Te Deums.

Saying Goodbye: Relearning the World

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A friend and I once talked about the experience of traveling to another part of the world. On the one hand there is something thrilling about entering a new world. An unfamiliar world can disclose possibilities beyond what we have imagined. New sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures can evoke new energy, creativity, and hope. New worlds invite us to access unexplored dimensions of our relationships with self, others, and God.

For my friend there is also a painful dimension of such travel. He spoke of how it feels to leave his wife to go far away for a long stretch of time. As the plane leaves the ground and for the first few hours in the air he always feels grief. It is not so much the temporary parting he grieves when the plane lifts away from the United States. Sharply aware in those moments of departure that his wife is everywhere woven into the fabric of his life, he contemplates the passing of time and how death will finally rend this fabric. "A little death," he calls the temporary parting. A foretaste of the grief to come.

It is a truism that life is full of goodbyes. Though some goodbyes are temporary and may seem rather insignificant in the larger scheme of things, they still have power to disclose our vulnerability or mortality. Other goodbyes—like graduation, the last child's departure from home, or retirement from a long-held position—are turning points in the seasons of our lives.

Sometimes we are more than ready to leave behind the cocoon of familiar ways. Hungry for metamorphosis, we open ourselves to the "undiscovered country" of the future. But even the most welcome transitions may still whisper, amidst great rejoicing and the expectation of wonders to come, that we are passing away.

Then there are those goodbyes, unwelcome to say the least, that can shatter our lives with their terrible permanence, their power to thrust us suddenly into worlds we never would have willingly chosen to enter. They show us that a new world may at times come upon us like a thief in the night, stealing away familiar joys, leaving us lost and bereft.

My recent research on the lament tradition and contemporary grief literature, together with experiencing the process of saying goodbye to Bill and Jean Lesher and all the transition that continues to challenge us at LSTC, has led me to reflect in these pages on the grief and hope involved in saying goodbye. In this essay I will focus on only one aspect of this reflection, that is, that serious goodbyes involve a process of

learning how to both relinquish a familiar world and receive a new world. Borrowing philosopher Thomas Attig's metaphor for how we grieve, I portray saying goodbye as a process of "relearning the world."[1] Although Attig's focus is on the experience of a loved one's death, I believe his depiction of grief as a process of relearning the world is helpful not only for understanding the grief experienced as a result of physical death but for understanding the challenge of other goodbyes as well.

Relearning the world: reflections from recent grief literature

Recent writing about grief has steered away from characterizing grief as a series of stages through which one travels toward recovery. Instead, writers have moved toward "thicker" descriptions of the processes that grievers describe as characterizing their experience and more attentiveness to the *communities* in which they grieve. The four insights which follow come from a family systems approach to grief.

1. Grievers experience a shattered world. In *Grief as a Family Process* family therapist Ester Shapiro describes bereaved adults' first response to grief as being almost like "a death blow; a heartbreak they might in fact not survive."[2] Most adults report "an enduring sense of unreality and a thereafter divided consciousness in their initial response to the news of a loved one's death."[3] This "divided consciousness," Shapiro contends, is not simple denial. Most bereaved persons, if asked, will readily attest that their loved ones are dead. Friends and family members observing them may see persons who seem to be facing up to the crisis of bereavement and functioning quite well. When invited to describe their reality, however, many adult grievers will talk about existing in a state of unreality. The term that comes closest to characterizing this experience of unreality, Shapiro says, is *dissociation.*

In simple terms, dissociation describes a state in which one's emotional experience becomes disconnected from one's intellectual experience. A person knows that she is at the funeral of her best friend, for example, but emotionally is disconnected from the full impact of the experience. She goes through the motions—singing the hymns, standing up and sitting down, acting attentive while the minister delivers the sermon, but is not fully present to the experience; it doesn't feel "real." Some people use the term "numbness" to describe this experience, although they may be acutely aware of what is happening around them.

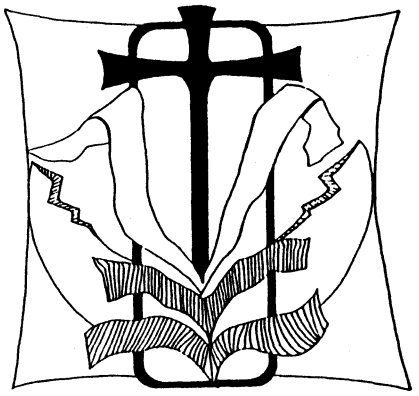
2. Grievers experience an altered relationship to time. This experience of unreality or disconnectedness is also related to the experience of time. Remembering the past can flood the griever with overpowering feelings of loss over a world that no longer exists; thinking about the future means acknowledging that the loss is truly irrevocable. Thus grievers sometimes describe the sensation of being suspended or "frozen" in time. Restoring the flow of time is part of what the labor of actively grieving a loss is intended to accomplish. This process can take considerable time, however, and in the meantime grievers exist in a "state of 'liminality' or transition, suspended between an old, obsolete social structural state and a yet to be established new one, in a nebulous

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[1] Thomas Attig, *How We Grieve: Relearning the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[2] Ester R. Shapiro, *Grief as a Family Process* (New York: Guilford Press, 1994), 21.

[3] Shapiro, 21-22.



place between the world of the dead and the world of the living."[4]

3. Grievers experience an altered "web." Another metaphor for grief is the metaphor of a web that has been shaken by a blow, altering its pattern and leaving many loose ends exposed. The metaphor illustrates how a change in one part of a life can affect the entire fabric of that life, although we are usually oblivious to the extent of this connectional pattern.[5] Nicholas Wolterstorff, whose 25-year-old son Eric was killed in an accident, wrote:

> [Eric's] younger brothers had begun to ask him for advice. To Claire and me he had become an equal, no longer a child to be cared for. Now he's gone, and the family has to restructure itself. We don't just have a gap inside us but together a gap among us. We have to live differently with each other. We have to live around the gap. Pull one out, and everything changes.[6]

We don't grieve alone, but within families and communities which, as human systems, struggle to regain equilibrium in the face of loss.

Although much writing about grief has emphasized the need for the full expression of grief feelings, Shapiro makes an observation which is exceedingly important for pastors and congregations. Looking at grief as a family/community process as well as an individual process helps us see that the first task in the face of loss centers on survival. For example, in the case of a young woman whose husband dies unexpectedly of a massive heart attack at age 35, leaving her with two young children, the widow is faced with several survival issues. These include how to reconfigure parental tasks and roles, how to cope with economic exigencies, how to organize a new daily routine, how to relate to the community in her new role as widow, how to find meaning in what is happening to her, and how to manage the chaos of her own feelings and those of her children.

The last thing this widow is likely to be able to do is to fully engage the range of feelings she has about this shattering loss. In order to do this, Shapiro contends, she needs communal resources in order to support her struggle to regain equilibrium. From situation to situation the economic, psychological, religious, and social resources grievers have for this struggle vary widely. How congregations and communities undergird grieving families with support has much to do with how soon families can do the emotional processing so important to future growth and development. Rebuilding the shattered web of one's family and personal life takes support from outside oneself as well as one's inner resources.

4. Grievers are challenged to allow loyalty to lost loved ones to be both continued and transformed. There is ample evidence from the stories of grieving people

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[4] Shapiro, 49-50.

[5] Attig, 137.

[6] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 99.

that they are deeply loyal to their deceased loved ones. Shapiro relates the story of a child, "Sam," who was only one and a half years old when his father died from a massive heart attack. Because he was so young when his father died, he had no direct memories of him. He had to rely on photographs, mementos, and the stories of others to evoke a living image of his father to warm him and assuage his loneliness. Of particular importance to him was a picture of his father holding him, which Sam kept at his bedside until he was five.

This picture became a key way for Sam to retain a vital connection with his father. When Sam was about three he went through a period during which he proclaimed that he was not going to become a boy but remain a baby. It occurred to his mother that Sam did not know how to remain connected to his father, who had known him only as a baby, as the photograph by Sam's bedside made clear. Sam's mother began to talk with him about how proud his father would have been to see him grow up and do the tasks his father loved to do. She located the taped speech that Sam's father had made at his *bris* (circumcision), in which he had proudly envisioned his son's growth to manhood and the things he wished for him. As Sam received some help envisioning his father as an active man who loved to fix things and play sports, Sam began to identify more and more with that image and no longer had to cling to his baby picture "as his last remaining bridge to his father."[7]

I have only scratched the surface of the challenges of grief for individuals and for communities, yet the four dynamics I have just mentioned suggest at least four critical tasks grievers face. The first is restoring enough balance or equilibrium in order to survive the blow. The second is restoring the flow of time in order to re-enter the present and future. The third is restoring the web of one's relationships with self, others, world, and God in order to flourish. The fourth is learning ways to love persons in their absence in such a way that going on with one's life and growth is conceived as an act of loyalty rather than betrayal. Actively engaging these tasks involves relearning the world.

The Psalms as window into the process of relearning the world

Walter Brueggemann's writings on the psalms have been helpful to many pastors. Here I want to draw on a particular feature of his work, namely, his description of how the psalms functioned in the psalmist's community of faith to bring to voice both the experience of a shattered world and the experience of a reconstituted world.

I believe this is a promising way to help contemporary congregations think about the Psalter, and potentially more helpful to grievers than many of the self-help guides to coping with grief. As contemporary psalmist Ann Weems writes: "...the help we need is far beyond self. Our only hope is to march ourselves to the throne of God and in loud lament cry out the pain that lives in our souls."[8] I also believe that we do not learn to hope alone. If, as in the psalmist's world, the locus for the prayer of pain and for all the myriad changes we face is the community of faith, then how we learn to pray *together* and how we learn to do leave-taking *together* can help lend shape and structure for the times when, like Jacob, we wrestle with God alone through the long night until the break of day.

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[7] Shapiro, 95-96.

[8] Ann Weems, *Psalms of Lament* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995), xvi.

The full expression of grief is crucial for the decisive turn to hope.

One way of understanding the psalms is that they present, in graphic detail, the testimonies of persons and communities who have experienced the shattering and reconstituting of their worlds. I believe that recovering the full range of these "moments" in the experience of God's people is essential for a theologically-informed and helpful response to those who grieve, and that with interpretive guidance and help, the Psalter can be a powerful resource to those who mourn shattered worlds and who passionately seek God's help in the "miry bog" (Ps 40:2).

In his provocative essay, "The Psalms and the Life of Faith," Walter Brueggemann categorizes the psalms according to how they function in the life of the faith community. In this "typology of function" the psalms are categorized as psalms of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation.[9]

Psalms of orientation. When I speak with church people about psalms of orientation, I often invite them to sing some contemporary hymns that fall into this genre, e.g., "For the Beauty of the Earth," "We Gather Together," "Now Thank We All Our God," and "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry." These hymns suggest an ordered life, a life undergirded by God's providential care. There is a gentleness, a serenity about the music; an unshaken confidence in God's goodness.

There are many of these kinds of songs in the Psalter—in creation psalms like Psalm 104, which reflect the coherence and goodness of the creation; in the psalms that teach clear, reliable retribution, in which evil is punished and good is rewarded (e.g., 1, 119); in some of the psalms of ascent that reflect domestic life that is in good order (127, 128, 131, 133). These psalms voice genuine gratitude and piety for rich blessings. They portray a world that is balanced and secure.[10]

Psalms of disorientation. Psalms of disorientation, namely, the lament psalms, give voice to an experience of shattered reality; a thoroughly disrupted equilibrium; an experience of extremity. Although the term "lament" is sometimes used as a synonym for whining or pouting, this is not the biblical sense of the word or even the dictionary sense of the word. Lament is a cry uttered from the depths of the soul.

If the psalms of lament are about *losing* orientation, then it must be assumed that the lamenter at one time *did* feel at home in the world, and is now in a situation profoundly unfamiliar. In reflecting on all the disturbing questions the laments raise (e.g., Why have you forsaken me? Will you hide yourself forever? Have you not rejected us?), Brueggemann lists various ways these questions have been understood—as motivations to get Yahweh to act, as raw expressions of emotion. He adds that these questions

> might also be understood as questions occurring to the speaker for the first time; bold new thoughts, the answers to which are as yet unknown.... The poet,

[9] Walter Brueggemann, "The Psalms and the Life of Faith," in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 3-32.

[10] Brueggemann, 10-11.

> in the collapse of convention, permits regression to deep questions never before permitted and until now censured by the community and by the self. They are the "ah-ha's" of a dangerous kind that go to the brink for the first time to ask, "What if...?" What if the whole orientation is a fraud that can no longer be relied upon? And once asked, such a probing can never be unasked. The disorientation, once brought to full speech, is irreversible.[11]

If seen in this way, Brueggemann contends, the function of these songs is "to enable, require, and legitimate the complete rejection of the old orientation" now seen, "if not as fraud, at least as inadequate to the new circumstance."[12]

There is a surprising turn at the conclusion of most of the laments. There is a turning from a yearning for the old to a readiness to receive the new.

> The conclusion of vow, praise, and "assurance of being heard" faces forward... Thus, whatever the spoken or acted device of the "turn," the movement reflects a firm resolve to look in a new direction. There is a turn from resentful remembering to a fresh anticipation of an equilibrium that is a gift from God, genuinely new and not a restatement of the old.[13]

Brueggemann's contention, voiced not only in "The Psalms and the Life of Faith," but in other works as well, is that the full expression of grief is crucial for the decisive turn to hope. There can be no receiving of a new world without the painful task of relinquishing the old. "Only grief permits newness."[14]

Psalms of reorientation. In my teaching I have spoken rather passionately about the value of the lament psalms for worship and pastoral care. As I have listened to the experiences of many grievers I have heard many times that it was incredibly significant to them when their pastors encouraged the full expression of their cries of pain and protest, especially their anger toward God. As one young widower put it, "It was either fight with God or abandon the relationship."

A student recently asked me what could be said about the presence of God in the lament psalms. I thought this was a wonderful question and struggled to think it through with her. I tried to say, as many biblical scholars have said, that such unabashed and bold dialogue with God testifies to a *vital relationship* with a living God. God is presumed to be *there*, and presumed to be able to *help*, if God will.

Yet this response didn't really get at her question. Where are the signs that God has indeed been present; has indeed helped? For that we must look to the psalms of reorientation (declarative hymns), which are new songs "sung at the appearance of a new reality, new creation, new harmony, new reliability...."[15] These are vivid testimonies as well, extravagant in their gratitude. The writer says that God "drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure... put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God" (Ps 40:2). God is declared to be trustworthy, not only before but on the other side of the desolate pit.

This is a powerful witness to the goodness and reliability of God indeed. In New Testament terms, hope is different after the cross than before it. The psalms of reorientation help us to glimpse the power of resur-

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[11] Brueggemann, 21.

[12] Brueggemann, 21.

[13] Brueggemann, 12.

[14] Walter Brueggemann, *The Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), see esp. 9-47.

[15] Brueggemann, "The Psalms and the Life of Faith," 22.

rection experiences. Yet, I would argue, each "moment" in the life of faith has its own integrity—the naivete and innocence experienced before profound disillusionment, the chaos of a devastated life, the testimony on the other side of the desolate pit. In real life we know that for some people there are storms they cannot weather; there is no guarantee in this earthly life that there is a way out of the pit.

Saying goodbye to the Leshers

Two aspects of "relearning the world" are especially poignant to me as I reflect on saying goodbye to the Leshers. First, it is our familiar "web" or world I believe we will especially mourn when we are parted. The individual friendships and colleagueship that we enjoy with Bill and Jean need not be lost, even though we lose sharing the daily round. California is not the end of the world. Even if it were, distance does not destroy the ties that bind brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. Not even death can do that.

But our familiar world is in the process of being irrevocably altered. Wolterstorff is right: Pull one out and everything changes. Especially when that one has been in the very center of the action, whose energy and personality has helped to shape the web of our life together. We must "live around the gap" for a while. Who will we be without Bill's thousand and one plans and schemes, his capacity to believe the best about us, his boundless energy? Who will we be without Jean's unfailing kindness and enthusiastic support? We don't quite know. Therein lies immense promise and immense anxiety. Or so it seems to me, at least. We will need to relearn the world of LSTC.

Relearning the world is no easy task for communities, even communities of faith. Restoring equilibrium during times of great change seems to tend toward reconstituting old patterns. How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?

It is easier to open our hands to the undiscovered country of the future when we understand that in so doing we are continuing to be loyal to the ones with whom we have lived, loved, and struggled in the past. It is easier to build a home in a new land if we have received an encouragement to travel there. This realization leads me to a word of gratitude for what is, in my mind, Bill's most profound legacy to us.

At the last faculty-staff gathering at Bill and Jean's home, Bill spoke about his joy for all that had been shared in that home through nineteen years of life at LSTC. He concluded his remarks by quoting Dag Hammerskjöld's familiar affirmation, "For all that has been, thanks. For all that will be, YES!"[16] It was such a "Bill" statement! In my mind, Bill's most profound legacy is the confidence he projects in a God who beckons us to enter new worlds with faith and hope, trusting that we will experience God's Yes there, as well as refining fire.

The goodbyes we say to the living are not necessarily tragic in nature, but they are no less profound. They are a foretaste not only of the grief to come, but an invitation to discover afresh the trustworthiness of a God who is known in the joys of a familiar world, the stresses of change, and the experience of receiving a new world beyond the boundaries of our expectations and imaginations. I am grateful, amidst the grief of saying goodbye, for the trust Bill and Jean have manifested in such a God. Surely God will help both them and us in the tasks of relearning the world.

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[16] Dag Hammerskjöld, *Markings* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. and Farber and Farber Ltd., 1964).

Globalization: A Challenge for Lutheran Missiology in the 21st Century[1]

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Doing theology and mission contextually is today our only option. The contextualization of theology—the attempt to understand the gospel in terms of a particular context—is an imperative which should concern all Christians committed to mission. The time is past when we čan speak of one right, unchanging theology, a *theologia perennis*, from the 16th century or any other period in church history. Just as our cultural and historical context plays a part in the construction of the reality in which we live, so this same context influences our understanding of God, the human condition, the incarnation, the reality of sin, salvation and faith. As mission history richly teaches, therefore, a theology which does not reflect the times, culture and concerns of a people, will be irrelevant at best and possibly harmful for the mission of the church in that place.

The ability to analyze and comprehend a given context is, consequently, one of the first and most critical steps in developing any theology or praxis of mission. This is no easy task, as many struggling North American churches today can confirm.

But what if a church's context is not restricted to merely its "own" local culture? How does one theologize or do mission if the context in which the church works is simultaneously local and global? In other words, how does a church do theology and mission contextually when its context is, so to speak, "glocal"? This question is critical because it reflects the growing reality of a shrinking world, a world in which the boundaries between local and global events, contexts, economies, information, technology and cultures are fluid. What this "new global order" means is that contextual the-

[1] Parts of this essay will appear in the article "Globalization" to be published in *The Dictionary of Mission* (Orbis Press, Fall 1997).

ology is still relevant, but it can no longer be restricted merely to local cultural, social or religious forces. Theology and mission must acknowledge the marriage between the global and local or risk missing the true nature of the world context in which we are called to do mission.

Globalization: a description

One emerging concept which addresses the relationship between the global and local is globalization. Just as postmodernism was *the* concept of the 1980s, globalization may be *the* concept of the 1990s, a concept which tries to express and analyze human development and change on a vast scale at the inauguration of the third millennium. Globalization has been used as a business concept since the early 1960s. By the 1970s its popularity expanded into many disciplines so that it began to replace the term "internationalization" in not only business, but in the areas of education and politics. The use of the term globalization today is ubiquitous both inside and outside the academic community. This is true despite the curious fact that within the academic community, especially among theologians, there is still no consensus on definition.

The word globalization has had at least four rather general meanings in reference to the way in which theology is taught at theological schools:[2]

1. Globalization means the church's universal mission to evangelize the world; to take the message of the gospel to all people, all nations, all cultures, and all religious faiths.

2. Globalization points to the ecumenical cooperation between various manifestations of the Christian church throughout the world involving an openness to and respect for the great variety of local theologies that are springing up all over the world church.

3. Globalization reflects the necessity of dialogue between Christianity and other religions.

4. Globalization refers to the mission of the church to the world, not only to convert and to evangelize, but to improve and develop the lives of the poor and politically disadvantaged.

Globalization, as used above, has already made a powerful impact on theological education.[3] This is true despite the fact that little work has been done to directly define or theologically understand globalization as a social phenomenon. In contrast, globalization is increasingly being used outside theological schools as a technical term by sociologists to define a new social dynamic around the globe. Some consensus is beginning to form among sociologists and philosophers about globalization's reality, dynamics, social impact and, in addition, its effect on religion. The nature of these findings could have a major impact on how the church understands mission "glocally." In other words, globalization may emerge for missiologists as one of the key concepts for comprehending the global context for doing mission in the 21st century.

How is globalization defined?[4] First, globalization is seen as an outgrowth and continuation of the modernization process

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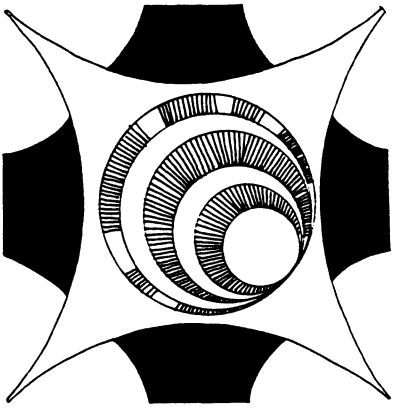
[2] Don Browning, "Globalization and the Task of Theological Education," *Theological Education Supplement—Globalization: Tracing the Journey, Charting the Course* (Pittsburgh: ATS, 1993), 15.

[3] See "Globalization and the Practical Theological Disciplines," *Theological Education 30.1* (Pittsburgh: ATS, 1993). Introduction by William Lesher and Robert Schreiter.

[4] See P. Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (California: Sage Publications, 1994), 14f.; Malcolm Waters, *Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 159f.; R. Robertson, *Globalization* (London, 1992).

in the West. This process, embedded in a capitalistic economy, frees the individual from some of the constraints of society. Because of its expansionist nature, globalization like modernization values progress and innovation. Its ethos for the individual is embodied in the French Revolution's "liberty, equality, fraternity," or in the American Revolution's "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Second, although some measure of globalization like modernization has always occurred, recent advancements in technology have accelerated these processes so that today, globalization is creating a worldwide uniform cultural reality; that is, globalization describes the process of the world becoming more and more "a single place" (R. Robertson). Globalization refers both to the compression of the world into a single place and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole (R. Robertson). The former "natural" constraints of geography and time are being quickly erased. The onrush of economic, technological, ecological, scientific, material, and political forces are demanding integration and uniformity, thus rapidly creating a homogeneous culture across the globe. The emerging global culture—sometimes whimsically referred to as McWorld, or the process of global culture's formation as "the Cocacolonization of the world"—is tied together by technology, communications, and commerce. Its icons include T-shirts, baseball caps, denim jeans, athletic shoes, MTV, Macintosh and McDonalds. The deeper processes and actions to which the concept of globalization now refers have been proceeding, with some interruptions, for many centuries. Nevertheless, the main focus of the discussion of globalization is on relatively recent times. The increasing interconnectedness of the world as a single place, and the consequences and dynamics of this



growing interconnectedness, is the primary focus of attention in globalization studies (P. Beyer, M. Waters).

Third, despite its connection with modernization, globalization as a movement is not simply another form of Western imperialism (although non-Western scholars and theologians often disagree with this point).[5] Modernization has been changing as it has been exported around the globe because its receiving cultures have not been passive but active. As modernization has interacted with local cultures, it has experienced a "ripple back" effect. This effect is sometimes referred to as "reflexivity." The result is that with globalization, modernization has taken on a new form. The West is no longer simply colonizing the world; the West itself is being "colonized" and changed in the process.[6]

Finally, although the formidable power of globalization tends to flatten and corrode local values leading to a greater uniformity and a self-conscious orientation to the world

[5] David Schuller, "Globalizing Theological Education: Beginning the Journey," *Theological Education Supplement—Globalization*, 14. (See n. 2.)

[6] Beyer, 8-9.

as a global whole, it also leads toward various kinds of global protests. Robertson has described these acts of protest against the powerful homogenizing force of globalization and, in the process, coined the term "glocalization" to express the reassertion of the local.[7] Others have analyzed a range of acts of local resistance ranging from fundamentalism through cultural revitalization to a new ethnification of local culture. These anti-systemic global protests, which Robert Schreiter calls "global flows," take shape as strong reactions both to what is viewed as the hegemony of Western imperialism (whether political, economic or cultural) and the failure of global systems to live up to their promised benefits. The result is that multifaceted battles are declared locally against every kind of cultural, religious, economic, and national interdependence, against every kind of artificial social cooperation or against any move toward cultural homogeneity from outside. This reassertion or retribalization of the local is, however, not anti-global but anti-systemic in nature. Its protest is very much included within the overall movement of globalization.[8]

In summary, globalization is a recent, complex, world-wide social phenomenon which encompasses two opposing forces of "homogeneity" and "particularism," forces which Benjamin R. Barber labels "McWorld and Jihad" and which Arjun Appadurai names "global flows" and "modern colonies." These forces are working simultaneously all over the world in the same places and at the same times. In short, the planet is falling precipitantly apart and coming reluctantly together at the very same moment. Both forces represent the dialectical dynamics of globalization: the one recreating various kinds of local borders through parochial concerns from within, the other making borders porous by universalizing markets, ideas and technology from without.

Globalization can thus be briefly defined as "a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding" (M. Waters). Globalization is the compression of the world into a single place and culture, and the intensification of our consciousness of this compression (R. Robertson). Or more succinctly, "Globalization is the compression of time and space under the forces of reflexive modernity." (R. Schreiter).

The church's response to globalization

The recognition of globalization as a cultural force raises questions about the future of this social development world-wide and how the church's mission will respond to it. What will be the consequences of this global movement on local cultures—their extinction or re-assertion? Does globalization mean a progressive homogenization of all cultures so that, two or three centuries from now, only "global culture" will exist? Or does globalization merely change the context in which particular cultures exist, implying transformation but not the disappearance of separate and recognizable identities? (P. Beyer) The answer to these questions will greatly define how contextual theology and mission are perceived and practiced in the 21st century.

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[7] See the collection of essays in R. Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage Publications, 1992).

[8] Beyer, 104ff. See also J. Friedman, *Cultural Identity and Global Process* (California, 1994).

Like culture, therefore, churches face serious challenges in the wake of globalization. What are the main challenges globalization poses to the church's mission?

Peter Beyer suggests in his book, *Religion and Globalization*, that globalized culture brings to every society not only homogenization but fragmentation, an ever increasing functional differentiation at every level. Thus, as any society becomes more complex and differentiated, it likewise becomes more fragmented. The specificity of this fragmentation, which functions in the same way as stations on a factory assembly line, has advantages in regard to the efficiency, development, and management of each system within global culture, e.g. the economy, business, politics, education, science, etc. Globalized culture's greatest disadvantage in regard to specificity is, ironically, the isolation of the systems it creates. Each of the systems tends to function autonomously, independent of any overarching schema or *telos*. What ties together these systems in society as far as meaning and purpose? How should society respond to and judge between all the divergent "global" claims made by each of its systems (e.g. economy vs. politics vs. science vs. religion)?

The church can make three general responses to the fragmentation of globalized culture: a traditional, a prophetic, or a revisionist response. The church can play the traditional role of "giving meaning" to the whole; as that social system which describes a culture's overarching *telos*. In a globalized society, where fragmentation between systems (science, technology, education, politics) becomes more evident, the church can try to play its traditional role by giving universal meaning to all of the global systems and, in general, "tying life together." Second, the church can accept a prophetic critical role, exposing society's ills or its lack of meaning or *telos*. As prophet, the church addresses the problems created by global culture, questions the global systems cannot or will not resolve (e.g. liberation theology, ecological theology, womanist theology). The church can also try to humble other systems (e.g. politics, science, or economics) which elevate themselves within global society and are made to stand for the whole. Third, as a revisionist force, the church can completely reject global culture and return society, or at least a remnant of society, to a pre-globalized ideal state of existence (e.g. fundamentalisms).

> Reassertion or retribalization of the local is not anti-global but anti-systemic in nature.

The church's response to globalized society, whether traditional, prophetic, or revisionist, faces the additional hurdles of religious individualism and religious relativism. These forces are particularly debilitating because they have a direct impact on the church's public influence within global culture. Because globalization is a form of the modernization process, its influences on religion are those of modernization: both a continuing relegation of religion to the private and voluntary sphere, and the relativism of religious values and beliefs.[9] As "faith" becomes more privatized and individualized, its ability to function as a public

[9] Beyer, 70-110.

discourse between global systems becomes weakened. The church's public power is further diminished when its values and beliefs are viewed over against the backdrop of all of the world's religions and value systems. Its voice can no longer unite because it is merely one voice among many. Under the impact of globalization, therefore, the church's influence as a religious system will tend to be diminished and relegated to the margins, and its responses to global movements and problems (traditional, prophetic, and revisionist) can be reduced merely to local movements and to private spheres of influence.

How then should the church's mission respond to these forces of globalization? How does contextual theology function in a "glocal" world which is becoming simultaneously homogeneous (McWorld with global flows) and localized (modern religious ghettos with their fundamentalisms), and which is increasingly being marked at the same time by religious individualism, relativism, and fragmentation in society?

Globalization and mission

In one sense, the church has outpaced modern society in response to globalization. The church has had a global vision since Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 28. The missionary expansion of the church in the 19th century and the ecumenical orientation of Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches in the 20th are recent evidences of this growing global posture. In addition, most churches in the West embrace the global cultural values of progress, equality, and inclusion as well as the global system values of progress, efficiency, technical rationality, and functional differentiation (e.g. specialization and professionalization of ministry). As mentioned above, many theological schools have already emphasized the need for the globalization of their theological curriculum. In response to globalization, therefore, five missional areas of the church are usually listed: mission and evangelism, ecumenism, interfaith dialogue, cross-cultural ministry, and peace, justice and ecological issues.

However, the church, especially the church in the West, must increasingly learn how to be the church within a worldwide global process which is radically changing the context for mission at home and abroad. How does globalization as the context for mission change how the church goes about doing mission? For example, how can the church balance the vitality of new emerging local theologies (e.g. the particularities of liberation theologies, feminist theology, Minjung theology, eco-spirituality) with the classical claims to universal truths in church dogma (doctrinal homogeneity or confessional compliance)? Can Christian worldwide mission and evangelism, as widely practiced until the mid-20th century, be sustained in an unaltered form when constantly challenged by the truth claims of all the world's religions? And given the crisis in global economy, global ecology and global politics, can the religions of the world unite to create a global ethic?

As a part of a massive re-contextualization of theology and mission under the impact of globalization, a few important themes will surely emerge as central to Christian mission. I suggest that these themes will not so much be new theological categories as a rethinking of traditional ones. These broad themes are: (1) the global responsibility of the church; (2) the defining of the human amidst the forces of globalization; (3) the naming of God (distinguishing between the Triune God and all the global gods); and, most importantly, (4) the confessional and missional implications of the church's catholicity.

Global responsibility: dialogue, witness, evangelism, justice, and mission. Globalization will certainly foster global protests by local Christian churches against the movements and injustices of global culture. Such protest might tempt the church to "flee the world." However, globalization must also foster an acceptance by churches of global responsibility and mission. Instead of fleeing, the church must become more enmeshed in the world. This will demand that the church practice solidarity with those who suffer under the forces of globalization: e.g. the poor, the environment. Ultimately, Christian mission can never flee the world for too long. Churches must embrace both anti-global protests as well as global culture as such in order to serve the world and reflect Christ's missional presence in it.

Global anthropology and global crises. One cannot easily escape the awareness that global crises have the potential to cause enormous trauma and social conflict both at home and abroad. One is also conscious that crises contain not only danger but also opportunities. So as the problems of ecology, sexuality, gender inequality, race, the sustainability of life, nuclear power, world order, and poverty are debated, one must likewise question the definition of humanity, the true vision of the *humanum*, which is being sought as the global community approaches these problems. Just as the new insights into the individual dramatically influenced the theologies of the 16th century, how will globalization's effect on the present anthropological sensitivities mold theological responses to both local and global definitions of the human situation?

Global gods and the Triune God. As the twentieth century merges into the twenty-first, the global village includes more than five billion religious people. The religions are not dying out in global culture; they are

How will God and God's work of salvation be imaged in global culture, or even re-imagined?

pervasive, powerful, influential, and growing. This sets the scene for dialogue about God and salvation. How will God and God's work of salvation be imaged in global culture, or even re-imagined? How will this imaging take place not only within Christianity itself but also in dialogue with all the world's religions? Religious pluralism poses its greatest challenge to Christian mission in the area of translating the name of God, and naming God's salvific work. Can Christianity's exclusive affirmation of salvation "in no other name" be balanced with its inclusive desire to discover the *logos spermatikos* everywhere; i.e. God's presence and saving truth in every culture, religion and place? The naming of God in global culture and the doctrine of the Triune God will certainly take more prominence in Christian mission theology as the unity and diversity of God's persons are more closely reviewed in reference to God's mission in the world.[10]

Catholicity and global confessionalism. Robert Schreiter suggests that the universalizing (dogma) and particularizing

[10] David W. Shenk, *Global Gods: Exploring the Role of Religions in Modern Societies* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1995).

tendencies (local theologies) felt within the churches as part of global culture may make "catholicity" the term theologically equivalent to "globalization." In terms of the four marks of the church confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, different ones have been especially significant at various points in church history: oneness in times of schism, holiness in the Donatist controversy, apostolicity at the time of the Reformation. Perhaps the time has come to reexamine and expand our understanding of catholicity, both in view of what Christianity has become and the world in which it is taking place (R. Schreiter).

Conclusion

What globalization will mean for the future of Lutheran missiology is not yet clear. Nevertheless, as the dynamics of "globalization"—and its Christian counterpart, "catholicity"—become clearer in describing both the context of our world and the church's mission therein, Lutheran missiology must make sure that its understanding and praxis of mission reflect truly a global confessionalism; that is, a confessionalism which can unite the church in and for "glocal" mission in response to the various forces of globalization around the world. Such a confessionalism much be inherently contextual in nature, responding to all the forces of both global and local cultures; it must be relevant to both global culture as such as well as the various local protests which emerge. Such a challenge appears daunting. Its alternative, however, would be a denial of the church's apostolic call and the catholicity of its mission.

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Making Disciples for the 21st Century

Robert Conrad
Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor of Educational Ministry
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Bill Lesher has been president of a seminary which has the mission of preparing "pastors and other church leaders to be effective interpreters of the gospel of Jesus Christ in local faith communities throughout the world." The mission of LSTC also includes helping the church "to be a confessing community that brings an evangelical witness to the contemporary world" and that "seeks to establish everywhere justice, peace, and wholeness." If the church is to be a "confessing community" its members must also be prepared "to be effective interpreters of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Bill Lesher has had a long and passionate interest in theological education for the laity. At the congregational level, education for entry into and participation in the Christian community is the beginning of theological education of the laity.

However, there is no consensus among Lutheran pastors and congregations about the length of time and the content of first theological education of the laity. I surveyed a number of congregations and found a range of time from two hours on a Sunday morning to twenty weeks in the adult catechumenate. There is also a difference of opinion in what is to be learned in preparation for membership. Congregations having a short preparation time tend to stress how to *act* as a member more than what to *believe* as a member. Thus, there are many answers to the questions, "What does it take to be become a member?" and "What does it mean to be one?" The questions need to be put into the larger context of discipleship. Membership and discipleship are not the same thing. Discipleship includes but goes beyond membership in a congregation.

Matthew 28:19-20 defines what it takes to become a disciple. Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." Baptism and teaching make disciples. Disciples are those who follow Jesus in what they believe and in what they do. Disciples are to know and believe what Jesus taught. Some of the early disciples had difficulty believing what Jesus taught. In John 6, Jesus said that he was true food and drink; those who ate his flesh and drank his blood would live forever. Some followers said it was a difficult teaching. Who could believe it? Jesus then made it even more difficult by asking what would happen if they were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he came from? After all, it is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is

useless. His words were spirit and life. That caused many to turn away from following him. So Jesus asked the twelve if they would also go away. Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Peter believed what Jesus taught but found it difficult to act as one of his disciples. So did the other disciples. When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane they all forsook him and fled. Peter compounded the desertion by denying that he even knew Jesus. It was difficult to remain a follower of Jesus in tough times. Jesus, however, called these same deserters back to discipleship. When Jesus saw Peter after the resurrection, Jesus asked three times if he loved him. When Peter insisted that he did, Jesus gave him the charge to feed the lambs and sheep. If the first disciples had a difficult time believing and acting as the followers of Jesus, can we expect that it will be any less difficult today?

If today's disciples are to be life-long followers of Jesus in good times and bad, teaching and learning must be a vital part of their lives. In some instances, teaching comes after Baptism and, in other instances, it comes before as well as after. When infants are baptized, teaching comes after. When older persons are baptized, teaching comes before and after. If little or no teaching is done before Baptism, a lot must follow. If much teaching is done before Baptism, more must follow. It is my conviction that the same principles apply to becoming a member of a congregation. If little or no teaching is done before Baptism/affirmation/membership, a lot must follow. If much teaching is done before Baptism/affirmation/membership, more must follow. In both instances, teaching and learning are life-long, for the goal is not just membership but the making of disciples.

Some may question whether Baptism and becoming a member are the same thing. The answer is yes and no. Baptism transcends but includes membership in a congregation. It effects a relation to God *and* to God's people. People who are unbaptized are usually baptized at the time they become members of a congregation. Those previously baptized are received by an affirmation of their baptism and the faith that began there. I don't know of any Lutheran congregations that accept unbaptized people into membership except in highly unusual circumstances.

Lutheran congregations vary in the amount of time and content expected of people who want to become members. I wrote to a number of pastors, most of them in the D. Min. program at LSTC, and asked them what they did to prepare people for membership. Eleven responded. Their responses are reported in the following paragraphs. They are grouped on a continuum from a short period of time to an extended period of time. The amount of time also affects the content included in the session or sessions.

The first group of congregations includes those who have a short time for preparation, usually one session of two to three hours. One suburban Chicago congregation requires a two-hour session on Sunday mornings. The session includes a history of the congregation, its mission statement, an organizational chart, a six-point outline of Lutheran teaching, expectations of members, an article on stewardship, and an extensive list of ministries for which people can volunteer. There is no indication of what educational opportunities are offered or expected of a member after joining the congregation. Another suburban Chicago congregation has a two and one-

half hour session which stresses fellowship, information about the congregation, expectations of new members and the congregation's expectations of them. People are given a list of areas in which they can share their gifts, and they are contacted by members to encourage involvement in areas in which they show interest. Follow-up calls are made to see how people are doing. Classes in Lutheran teaching are offered but not required for membership.

A new congregation in the Chicago suburbs offers a three-hour Sunday afternoon session with three segments: Christian theology, congregational ministries, and membership expectations, including a spiritual gifts inventory. Additional seminars in Bible and theology are offered but not required for membership. The pastor is planning to offer three or four seminars which qualify people for a discipleship degree. The congregation also has an annual renewal of membership each November. People are given a review of their involvement in the past year and a list of the congregation's ministries. They are asked to renew their membership, indicate what they plan to do and make a financial pledge. The membership is highly mobile, so the commitment for members' involvement in specific areas of ministry is only for one year at a time.

A congregation in the Southwest offers monthly three-hour seminars on Sunday afternoons. The first seminar is Newcomer's Orientation. It includes the story of the congregation, its vision, an outline of what Lutherans believe, opportunities for involvement, a form for personal spiritual journeys and get-acquainted experiences. People join the Sunday after completion of the first seminar. Two other seminars are offered. "How to Deepen Your Friendship with God" stresses the life of prayer, devotion, and tithing. "How to Discover Your God-given Potential" uses a spiritual gifts inventory to help people discover where they can best be involved in ministry. New members are encouraged to take the second and third seminars and join the "Circle of Eagles," a group that gathers for breakfast every six to eight weeks with one of the pastors and/or other staff members. Many leaders are selected from this group.

> If today's disciples are to be life-long followers of Jesus in good times and bad, teaching and learning must be a vital part of their lives.

A suburban congregation in the Twin Cities offers one six-hour session on a Saturday or two Sunday sessions of two and one-half hours each. The sessions are offered seven times a year. The first part of the sessions includes a statement of the congregation's faith and mission, that is, the teachings of the church universal and the Lutheran church in particular. The second part focuses on the discovery of gifts and how to use them in the ministries of the congregation. An extensive spiritual gifts inventory is used along with a listing of the many ministries of the congregation. Informative pamphlets for each of the ministries are distributed to the new members.

Most of the congregations in this group have moved to intensive Sunday sessions in order to reach busy and highly mobile people. The focus is on building relation-

ships among the people in the class and to the congregation. The discovery of spiritual gifts and how to put them to use in congregational ministry has a high priority. There is more attention to what a member does than to what a member believes. There are optional classes in Bible and theology for people to attend after they have become members. Some of the congregations have an intentional follow-up program to see if people are involved in study and ministry. Others do not seem to have much follow-up. Congregations need to follow up on new members and engage them in lifelong learning and service; that's the way disciples are made. An interesting sidelight is the emergence of new categories of members. Those who pursue study in various classes and seminars in one congregation are called "Eagles." Another congregation proposes to call them "Disciples."

A second group of congregations are in the mid-range of time and content expectations. Most of them require four to eight weeks of new member classes. An Ohio congregation has classes that run from four to eight weeks, depending on the participants. The pastor uses Dan Erlander's *Baptized We Live* as the major curricular piece. People are usually accepted into membership by Affirmation of Baptism. There is follow-up on enlisting people for various ministries in the congregation. A Madison, Wisconsin, area church has new member orientation four times a year. Five to six sessions on "What Lutherans Believe" are offered on Thursday evenings for one and one-half hours. One of the pastors teaches the class and lay members from various congregational ministries join the class to inform people about ministry opportunities. One congregational member becomes a sponsor for each new member. There is follow-up at three, six, nine, and twelve months to see if people are incorporated into the congregation. A congregation in Joliet, Illinois, offers new member classes three times a year. Some classes meet for eight sessions on Sunday afternoons but the pastor reports that a recent class met for five sessions on Sunday mornings. Each session has relational activities, information about the congregation, and Bible and/or theological study. New members are followed up to get them involved in ministries they are interested in according to a time and talent survey.

A Tampa, Florida, congregation offers classes that meet on six Thursday evenings for one and one-half hours. The pastor uses "Serendipity" relational exercises and Augsburg Fortress small group resources. He is not satisfied, though, that Lutheran teaching receives enough attention. Class members also attend two Sunday morning sessions arranged by the Director of Lay Ministries. There they meet congregation members and are informed about the ministries of the congregation. New members fill out a time and talent survey and are later contacted regarding their areas of interest. However, the pastor says that there needs to be long-term follow-up every three months to see how people are doing. Another congregation in suburban Chicago has a two-track system. One is for those who come from a Lutheran background and the other for those who do not. The latter meet five evenings in a "Welcome to the Family" course. The content of the course is based on *The Divine Drama*. People in both tracks are required to attend a new member orientation session and have a one hour interview with the Director of Assimilation. The director makes certain that new members become involved in ministries according to their interests.

The longest period of time for preparing to become a member is the twenty weeks required by a Michigan congrega-

tion. The pastor uses the adult catechumenate model. The first ten weeks begin in October and end with the Baptism of Jesus. Persons ready for baptism are baptized at that time. The second ten weeks lead up to the Easter Vigil with Holy Baptism for those not yet baptized and Affirmation of Baptism for those already baptized. The basic text is Luther's Small Catechism. The Apostle's Creed is the organizing principle. The Ten Commandments, for instance, are studied in connection with the Second Article and the sacraments and worship in connection with the Third Article. Persons in the group have congregational sponsors who work with them throughout the process.

The adult catechumenate is a model receiving increased attention among Lutherans. The basic model is that of the Roman Catholic Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, a rite which has Anglican and Lutheran adaptations. The original rite has four stages: (1) a period of evangelization and precatechumenate which ends when inquirers are ready to enroll as catechumens and are accepted in a public rite; (2) the period of the catechumenate in which participation in worship and instruction takes place over a period of time and ends with the public enrollment of those seeking Baptism or membership, usually on the first Sunday in Lent; (3) the period of enlightenment during Lent which ends in Baptism or acceptance into membership at the Easter Vigil; and (4) the Easter to Pentecost period of further instruction in the responsibilities of membership.

The adult catechumenate is the most extensive and intensive model of preparation for membership in the church. To my knowledge, it tends to be used in small or middle-sized congregations in areas where the population is somewhat stable. It does not seem to be used in large congregations or those serving highly mobile populations since the time involved makes it difficult for staff to devote the time and for people to participate regularly. Another factor for its non-use in many congregations is the principle adopted by some that people should have as many avenues into the church as possible and becoming a member should not be an intimidating process. The assumption is that people will continue to grow in discipleship in small groups after they become members. That depends on an organized and intentional effort on the part of the congregation to follow through with new members, an effort not always evident in some congregations. If there is no consistent follow-up, new members will not grow in becoming disciples and they will probably drop out as members. As one of the pastors of a new and growing congregation said, "The next big concern in the church will be the integration of members already gained." His statement underscores the point that it is the responsibility of every congregation to make disciples by Baptism/affirmation/membership *and* teaching—a life-long process.



The Church as a Community of Belonging in a Society Divided by Economic and Social Class

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Belonging: our passage into the future

The community of unconditional belonging—belonging across all boundaries—is a basic element of our current cultural situation, the world over. The search for such community is not new; it is perennial, and it is universal. It is as fundamental to the situation in which the church ministers as anything else we can mention. Community marked by unconditional belonging is basic to the shape of the present; it constitutes the passage which our past identity must negotiate in its movement toward the future of its possibilities. Whatever we think our identity to be as the ELCA and whatever we believe its future to be, they cannot be actual for us apart from the community of unconditional belonging. Consequently, the ministry of our pastors and or our congregations in the decades ahead will be judged, in a significant way, by its concern for such community. Since William Lesher has devoted so much of his life to carrying out our church's ministry and providing resources for others to do the same, it seems appropriate to devote this essay in his honor to reflection upon a particular facet of ministry in the context of belonging.

Understanding the present

Since we presently have not yet realized this unconditional belonging in our existence, it stands over against us as a possibility to be actualized. Beyond that, however, it is also the seedbed for the fruition of our possibilities. When we understand this about our present situation, we recognize also that

the present is not only passage, but that it can also be the matrix of God's enablement and empowerment for our future. This tells us even more about how we should understand our present, how it is far more than simply an environment to which we must adapt in order to survive. To view the present situation in such survivalist terms is not incorrect, but it is inadequate.

Paul Tillich understood the present situation as the medium in which human existence voices its most basic questions, the questions to which the gospel must speak a response, if the gospel is truly to be gospel. I would extend his insight to say that the present asks the questions to which the church must respond if it is to be church. Joseph Sittler spoke of the gospel as melody and the contemporary cultural situation as the counterpoint in which that melody occurs. The melody has little meaning apart from its counterpoint, and we believe that the contrapuntal context is also devoid of meaning without the melody.

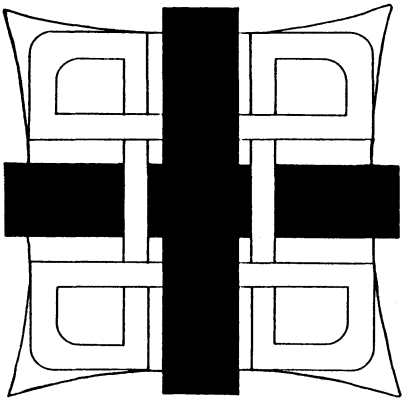
Our present situation is not external to what the gospel is as gospel, nor to what the church is as church. The present situation in which we live is not simply the target at which we aim evangelical ammunition. Rather, the present is also God's creation, in relationship to which gospel and church are transformed by God to become what they are called to be.

We must criticize and deepen the survivalist approach to the present. This survivalist mentality is widespread around and within our church. A good deal of what we hear about the challenge of the evangelical churches and the megachurches is survivalist in tone, and the same is true of much of what we hear about the secularist challenge. The survivalist mentality shapes our talk about our Lutheran identity as the ELCA. The identity-anxiety that we have been suffering from for the past few years is often a plea for an identity that will survive the onslaughts of the current situation in which we live. Such anxiety is understandable, but, at the end of the day, it is not worthy of the church of Jesus Christ.

Besides the survivalist mentality, there is another position that must be rejected: the view that the present cultural situation is so dismal, so demonic, so obsessed with domination, profit, and pleasure that the church must declare the situation to be nothing less than the kingdom of Satan and shape its ministry accordingly. If the survivalist anxiety is understandable, once we recognize the fear of failure, so, too, the need for prophetic denunciation can be appreciated for its keen awareness of the profound and genuine evil that marks our current situation. Demonizing the situation we live in is not adequate for ministry.

However we evaluate the current situation, we ought to make the attempt to read it carefully, as if it were a text, in order to discern the fundamental questions and cries that it utters. It is in response to those questions and cries that the church will invest itself in ways that shape the manner in which God brings forth possibilities for both the church and its situation.

If we listen carefully to these questions and cries, and if we attempt the most discerning interpretation of what we hear and read, we will not pander to the situation in the interests of survival, nor will we simply authorize everything we find in the situation, just as we will not write off the human substance that comes to expression in the situation. Rather, the church will acknowledge the authenticity of the questions and the cries and respond in ways that transform the situation beyond what the situation itself can imagine and in directions that are quite different from the world's expectation. The church will enter into the situation in which it has been planted and share in



God's transformation of the present situation, because it recognizes that the situation in which we live is also God's creation, for which Jesus Christ lived and died, and which God will never abandon, a promise that is confirmed through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The cry for belonging comes to us in a world shaped by a technology and a pluralism that give a totally new face to the world in which today's Lutherans are called to minister—a world in which we are intensely aware of the human community as a single global community existing within a fragile planetary ecosystem. Paradoxically, the more intense our awareness of the entire global village becomes, the more intense our perception of the diversity within that village becomes.

We might imagine the world as a stage on which all sorts and conditions of people have always been standing, but on which only a few received the beam of the public spotlight, while others remained unseen in the shadows. In our time, the lights have gone on all over the theater, and everyone can see everyone else—the stage is full; even the audience is on the stage. Furthermore, everyone on the stage demands not just to be seen, but to be allowed to be who they are.

Cornel West makes this same point in his analysis of the 1992 riots in Los Angeles, in the wake of the Rodney King affair:

> The Los Angeles upheaval forces us to see not only that we are not connected in ways we would like to be but also, in a more profound sense, that this failure to connect binds us even more tightly together. *The paradox of race in America is that our common destiny is more pronounced and imperiled precisely when our divisions are deeper.*[1]

Sociocultural belonging: multiculturality and social ministry

There is no emphasis that has invaded our public rhetoric more in the United States, both within the church and outside it, than that of "multiculturality." Multiculturality is both a moral and ecclesiological mandate. I suggest, however, that it is also a structure of our understanding, of our very nature as creatures of God who have been redeemed by Christ. If we accept the challenge to foster multiculturality, then we have already exhibited a prior relationship of belonging to those cultures, whether we are consciously aware of it or not.

A visit to the Barnes Foundation in suburban Philadelphia, to view Dr. Barnes' amazing collection of art and equally stunning presentation of his collection, teaches the visitor how deeply Western painting has drunk from the well of African culture. If you are, as I am, an admirer of Modigliani's marvelous faces, you are equally an admirer of the African mask art from which Modigliani drew inspiration. It is better

[1] Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 4.

known, perhaps, that if you are a devotee of rock music, you have already received a legacy of the spirit of African American culture. Equally, as Cornel West reminds us forcefully in *Race Matters*, if you have enjoyed the benefits of American society, particularly economic benefits, you have declared your dependence on the cultures of the African Americans—and also, we might add, the Latinos and the Asians—whose labor, often even today nearly slave labor, has been indispensable to the economic accomplishment of our nation.

These examples make the point that the cultural aspect of our multicultural belonging goes hand in hand with other dimensions of our sociological belonging which encompass what we might call "social justice" and also to what is termed "the common good." Approaching these rubrics from the perspective of belonging throws light on particular facets of both.

When we manifest concern for social justice, we are also acknowledging that we belong both to those who suffer injustice and also to our own past identity that must be transformed in present action if justice is to occur. Social justice concern in our local neighborhoods and communities exhibits our sensitivity to the matrix of our belonging. Insensitivity to justice issues in our community expresses our weak bond of belonging to that community and its physical placement. The commonplace relocation of congregations underscores the low priority that is given to the particularities of belonging, or to the inability to belong to certain situations. Conversely, strong social justice concern and action are first of all neither a matter of good being done for a community nor a matter of righteous performance. Much more they are expressions that we belong to our situations and the importance of that belonging to us. Beyond the local neighborhood, justice concerns for the larger society, even in far parts of the world, is an articulation of our belonging. The ultimate model of this belonging is, of course, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, in which God expressed a fundamental covenant belongingness to the creation that God had conceived and brought into actuality. Recalling the fourth century theologian, Gregory Nazianzen, God did not relocate out of the human incarnation on the grounds that the human situation was untenable or too hopeless. The life and death of Jesus portray the career of divine love whenever it refuses to deny its covenant belongingness to the creation.

Concern for the common good is a critical dimension for life in the United States today, and throughout the world. Although it is most often overlooked in the public discussion today, the turmoil we are witnessing on issues of federal entitlements, health care, insurance, tax reform, government regulation, and the interaction between local forms of government and larger units of the same are all testimony to how difficult it is for us to comprehend our context of belonging in this society. The questions of entitlements to the poor, the disabled, and to other segments of society, as well as those of taxes, regulation, and health care insurance all orbit around the issue of *whether* we belong to each other and *how* we belong. Do we belong to the land and our natural resources intimately enough that our private use of them should be regulated for the common good? Do those who achieve affluence and wealth belong to the social nexus that enabled their success, and do the proceeds of their success also belong in some way to that social nexus or not? This facet of the debate over tax reform and entitlements ought not be ignored. Is our health in this society strictly an individual matter of luck and life style, or are illness and health, the short-lived and

the long-lived, the genetically defective and the genetically sound, linked together in the network of social belonging? This dimension of the health care and insurance debate ought not be shoved under the rug. Do the affluent belong to the poor, and the poor to the affluent? Does business belong to the employees and to the public, and the employees and the public to the business? These are all questions of the common good, of our belongingness. Furthermore, they are all questions that the church must also discuss, if it understands itself as truly belonging to a world in which God became incarnate in Christ. Both the secular society and the church prefer to mask these questions of belonging behind the rhetoric of big government, lower taxes, and freedom from regulation. But even as the various segments of our society nervously declare their independence from each other, our ineradicable belonging to each other becomes more painfully clear.

Beyond the economic, political, sociological, and psychological perspectives on multiculturality, the church will affirm an *ecclesiology of belonging*. Such an ecclesiology is integral for understanding who we are and our passage into what we will become as church, by the grace of God. The church is not an unconnected, isolated island of catholic and Lutheran traditions that defy the smudge and smell of belonging to a neighborhood and to a society that God cares about. We cannot for a moment reflect on the future that God wills for the ELCA without recognizing that our future is the future of a church that is incarnated in this society, here and now, in the particular shape that it is assuming here and now. Our identity is interwoven with *this society*, and this society is the present place and time in which we act out our hope for the future. To turn away from this fact is to deny the ambience of our belonging and to opt out of the incarnation that God opted for in Christ.

These reflections on socio-cultural belonging are not meant as an exhortation to activism. Rather they intend to underscore the context of belonging that is intrinsic to who we are as a church and who we are called to become—driven by the possibilities that God has placed within us and which God is transforming for the future. The sociocultural dimension of belonging is not the only one that confronts our ministry today, but it is perhaps the most urgent.

Lutheran theology and belonging

In our tradition, we most often emphasize the church as a community of persons. Luther's summary of the third article of the creed, from his *Large Catechism*, articulates this article of our faith: "I believe that there is on earth a little holy flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ."[2] This understanding of the church is also reflected in Article VIII of the Augsburg Confession.[3] Despite the sentimentality that often accompanies our retrieval of this idea, and even though it does not encompass all that we believe about the church, it is certainly central to our belief, and belonging is at its core. In his 1519 treatise, "The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ," Luther speaks of this community gathered around the altar as a kind of city, with persons of high estate and low, from all occupations and ages.[4] Further, in Luther's view, every person shares

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[2] In Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1959), 417.

[3] Tappert, 33.

[4] In Helmut Lehman, ed., *Luther's Works*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), vol. 35, 51-2.

equally the risks and the benefits of the city. The citizens belong to one another. This eucharistic community was not only a microcosm of the larger society, it was called to include all of the society.

In addition to this basic concern for inclusiveness, the Lutheran tradition exhibits a concern that the inclusive community be gathered around the truth of the faith. Even though this concern has even been enshrined in the term, "pure doctrine" (*pura doctrina*), its more compelling expression is found in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, where agreement in the teaching of the gospel (*doctrina evangelii*) is the requisite for the unity of the church. To be sure, this concern for truth has often been in tension with , even destructive of, the thrust toward inclusiveness, but the intention of our tradition is that the two be held together as the foundations of community (Augustine called this the tension between love and truth).

The ELCA has adopted mission goals that seek to be faithful to this basic Lutheran teaching about the church. Intentions of inclusiveness of gender, race, and social placement have been enunciated by our church since its formation in 1988. This traditional picture of the church has been shattered, however, by the increasing technologically and demographically driven pluralism of U.S. society. In no other segment of our tradition is it more clear that Luther and the churches that grew out of his movement lived in a social matrix that was markedly different than ours in its monocultural character. So stunning is the difference that we must conclude that there is no straight line from Luther to the ELCA when it comes to understanding the church as community of persons. We have also honored the concern for truth as it is expressed in article VII of the Augsburg Confession—particularly in the scrutiny to which we have subjected the ecumenical proposals for rapprochement with Episcopalians, Reformed, and Roman Catholics.

Challenge to our theology: economic and social class

It may be that most of the northern European Lutheran immigrants who came to the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were of the peasant and working classes, but over the generations their churches became middle class congregations, including successful farmers. In the fourth quarter of our century, new trends have appeared that make economic and social class placement in our society as divisive and entrapping as they were in the societies from which our immigrant ancestors came.

Sociologists have observed for a long time that our society prefers the fiction that social class distinctions are unimportant and perhaps even absent from our life. We know better. Empirical studies of social class differences and their interpretations have been published by top rank scholars at least since the 1930s.[5] After the Second World War, our society maintained its stratification, but made great progress in narrowing the gap between rich and poor and, even more importantly, in creating a so-called safety net that raised the lowest level beyond which the poor could fall.

Since the late 1970s, however, much more disturbing trends have set in. In the United States, the gap between rich and poor has widened faster than in any other industrialized society. Even more disturbing, among these same societies, ours is the only one in which the plight of the poor is

[5] Dennis Gilbert and Joseph A. Kahl, *The American Class Structure: A New Synthesis* (Homewood, IL: The Dorsey Press, 1982).

becoming worse, the safety net deteriorating, so that as the rich become richer, the poor actually become poorer. This trend means that a church like the ELCA, which is so firmly ensconced in the middle and upper-middle classes, is increasingly alienated from the large population of the lower economic and social classes and even more from the poor. It is increasingly difficult for our church to minister to these persons who live outside the dominant social class placement as members of our communities. We are more and more inclined to minister to them as recipients of our social welfare rather than as brothers and sisters around the altar of Holy Communion, as companions for our children and youth in church activities, as members of congregational committees, and the like. Men, women, and children from the lower end of the economic and social class ladder simply are not present in our local church communities, except in unusual circumstances.

Note once again that I am not raising these issues primarily as concerns of justice and social welfare, although they are that. I am underscoring their significance as issues of belonging, and in particular, of persons belonging to each other as persons. In this respect, I am not calling for the church to develop a social welfare policy directed at the poor, but I am asking how we can nurture personal belonging across social class boundaries, how our altars can indeed gather around them a macrocosm of the society, as Luther took for granted in his demographically quite different situation.

I believe that the destructiveness and suffering heaped upon persons by economic and social class division in the United States may well be known in the next century as our own "confessing church" problem. In Germany under Hitler, the churches brought disgrace upon themselves for their failure to recognize the anti-Jewish policies of the society and make efforts to counter them. The Confessing Church emerged from a remnant of the churches and did work underground against Hitler's policies and did attempt to serve the needs of the Jews. Even today, the mainstream churches bear the stigma of their failure, and the Confessing Church stands as a courageous attempt to be the authentic church under Hitler. Thirty years from now we may well find our churches falling under a similar judgment of history. Millions of Americans are becoming increasingly poor and disenfranchised. What record of protest and ministry have our churches presented in the face of this trend?

Economic and social class condition decisively the context in which belonging happens or does not happen today, to be sure, but there is a deep yearning within the human community today for belonging that can surmount the divisions of class. We can hear the cry that emerges from this yearning, if we but have the ears to hear.

Theology in light of the challenge

The concern for truth in community life is not outmoded today. Certainly, our life is marked by the attempt to build community among the various peoples of the world and of our own nation on ideologies that are inadequate and even false. The ideologies of hedonistic pleasure, of ethnic imperialism, of gender dominance, of economic interest are to the fore today as proposals for building community. Truth is not secondary to our community life. Nevertheless, truth cannot be real except in community, and we must be clear about the fact that community beyond the narrowest loyalties of the human race is what is in question in our day; such community is what is in danger of collapsing or, even more, of never

even coming into being. Consequently, to focus on truth as if it were the *precondition* of community is demonic and death-dealing. Truth in the Lutheran Church is not threatened by inclusiveness and cultural difference, rather it is threatened by accommodation to the particular cultures of those who hold power in our society.

Today in the United States, we are witnessing the large-scale disengagement of the affluent from the broader reaches of community in our nation. Cutbacks in welfare assistance, moves to privatize public schools, the weakening of the federal government's ability to assist the poor, the refusal to accept tax burden in behalf of the poor, and the almost total dominance of a shortsighted free market competition ideology that reduces many workers to the status of hourly wage slaves—these are but a few of the ways in which, in effect, *whether by design or not*, the affluent classes attempt to insulate themselves from the demands of community in our society. Since there is no mandate of our biblical faith more prominent than that of affirming the solidarity of the human community and taking responsibility for those who are less privileged economically, the ELCA will not want to be found lacking in its concern for how our society responds to the dehumanizing consequences of the economic and social class system that has developed in the last few decades. Furthermore, since we deeply believe that all wealth is a gift from God, for the use of which we are accountable as stewards, economic disengagement from the rest of the community is unthinkable for Christians.

Earlier epochs of our Lutheran history offered two possibilities for building community: either solid societal structures on which the Lutheran churches could build—as in Luther's own time or in the settlement of Westphalia or in the ethnic structures of Africa and parts of Asia—or the possibility of cultural homogeneity, from which our churches drew during most of their history in North America. Today, however, the task of community formation is that of bringing into being communities that are viable in a technologized world, that cross the boundaries of pluralism, and that actualize belonging in the context of competing economic and social class interests.

To focus on truth as if it were the *precondition* of community is demonic and death-dealing.

Structures for such community do not exist in any society in the world in any significant fashion. Since the society of the United States is itself struggling to fashion such structures, there are few for the ELCA to build upon. Furthermore, since communities of cultural homogeneity are precisely the sorts of inadequate communities that do not respond to the larger human need for belonging, such homogeneity cannot be more than a transitional option for the ELCA.

The inadequacy of culturally homogeneous community

This latter point must be recognized clearly and reflected upon—and discussed widely. The ELCA may be tempted to follow a strategy of fostering culturally homogeneous sub-communities, but that will work only in certain places, and such communities cannot be the model or normative im-

age for the ELCA as one national church. Since the route of cultural homogeneity is so widely encouraged and, on the surface, so successful, the ELCA must be all the more clear about the inadequacies of this strategy. The human cry today for community, issuing so poignantly from the soul of humankind on this planet and in our United States society, places belonging beyond cultural homogeneity at the highest priority—belonging without conditions. Homogeneous communities cannot proclaim and practice belonging without conditions. Such communities always define belonging in terms of "being like us." Furthermore, "being like us" functions as the criterion of truth that is actually placed above community as such with all of God's creatures.

Precisely that criterion of "being like us" is at the heart of the cry that expresses the longing of the human soul today, particularly in the United States. Whether the truth of "being like us" is filled with the content of ethnicity, gender, economic and social class, or some other factor of homogeneity, it serves as the sword that slashes both the human spirit and the human body. The multicultural cry is a deep plea that the truth of one culture not be allowed to serve as the blade that cuts off community for those who lie outside that particular truth. The cry that crosses economic and social class is the plea that the truth of affluence and bourgeois civility not be tolerated as the knife that cuts bonds of belonging with the working class and the poor.

Cultural homogeneity is genuinely demonic, as Paul Tillich understood that concept. The demonic is something good that turns against itself and becomes evil. Cultural homogeneity is a blessing, a gift bestowed on us from the past, and it enables a great deal that is good. This blessing is fundamental, and is in no way to be despised. If the homogeneity is made into a *criterion of the belonging*, however, whether theoretical or functional or both, it is anti-human and anti-life. If homogeneity as one legitimate phase of human community displaces the movement toward larger unity, then it exacerbates the hurt that the human race seeks to heal today.

This demonic quality must be understood as fully as possible. For many persons in our society, culturally homogeneous community is a survival reality, it is life-giving. Within the church, however, and also within the larger society, this homogeneity must be considered only a provisional survival mechanism, and only one phase of the rhythm of human development on our planet. Belonging across boundaries represents this complementary phase of greater unity. Since this is the phase that we presently are resisting, we find it nearly impossible to negotiate the passage that it sets before us—and this is nowhere clearer than in our inability to cross the boundaries of economic and social class. All homogeneous communities within the church must recognize this. The concern for pluralism and multiculturality—whatever form it takes—cannot avoid this passage. Human beings today feel deeply that they must belong to more than those who are "like us." This feeling is the voice of possibilities that are peculiarly insistent in the United States, even as the resistance is equally insistent.

Belonging across boundaries does not demean our particularities and our communities of homogeneity; indeed, it is in those communities that we have accessed life and God's good gifts. Belonging across boundaries points us to the truth that our communities of homogeneity cannot define the length and breadth of our humanity and of our human belonging. We are grateful that the person whom this volume honors, William Lesher, has witnessed so vividly and energetically to this reality of belonging.

Theology of the Cross

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Throughout his ministry, William E. Lesher has been a champion of globalization, multiculturalism, the common good, the urban experience, and social action. He has always looked toward the future with confidence and has worked diligently so that this future might reflect more fully God's intentions for the creation. Thus he has called the church and those who are trained leaders within the community of faith to be agents of transformation in the world. His vision for the human community and for the church, his optimistic spirit, and his passion for justice have aided him in his quest. However, it is ultimately his trust in the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ which has inspired his message and ministry and which has enabled him to continue in spite of apathy and opposition. Therefore, an exploration of Luther's theology of the cross, not so much from an academic or scholarly but from a spiritual, pastoral, and proclamatory perspective, serves as a fitting tribute to the ministry of William E. Lesher. It also provides the church with a crucial resource as it seeks to make a faithful witness in the new millennium. In his theology of the cross, Martin Luther proclaims Christ as the one who reveals God's intentions for humanity and for the whole creation and who frees the people of God to live life in God's presence and in service of the other. William E. Lesher has modeled that kind of life for many of us.

Introduction

The theology of the cross is a fascinating and multifaceted theme in Luther's thought. Indeed, it could easily be argued that it constitutes the very heart of the reformer's theology and informs all of his theological constructs. It also illustrates Luther's tendency to think dialectically, i.e., to conceptualize reality in seemingly contradictory or paradoxical but in fact complementary terms.

While the diverse themes which constitute the theology of the cross are addressed repeatedly and widely in Luther's writings, the Heidelberg Theses are generally considered to be his most focused articulation of the theology of the cross; they will serve as the primary source for this discussion. The publication and dissemination of Luther's 95 Theses in 1517 very quickly brought him to the attention of the theological, ecclesiastical, and political worlds. Both eager support for and bitter criticism of Luther's message were voiced. The opponents of Luther, especially within the Dominican order, recognized the implications of his position for the theology, piety, and fiscal resources of the church, and they encouraged Pope Leo X to deal

with the audacious monk from Wittenberg. The Pope decided that it would be best to examine Luther and to discipline him, if necessary, through his own monastic order. Luther was therefore commanded to appear before the General Chapter of the Augustinian Hermits in Germany which met in Heidelberg in the Spring of 1518. Johannes von Staupitz, Luther's own monastic superior and spiritual advisor as well as the vicar of the Augustinian Hermits in Germany, asked Luther to prepare theses which would be debated in Heidelberg. He encouraged Luther to avoid volatile issues, however, and to focus on the themes of sin, free will, and grace. Staupitz may have sought to avoid controversy, but these themes were in fact essential topics for Luther's emerging evangelical theology and his difficulties with the theology and practices of his contemporary church. Luther prepared the Theses and traveled to Heidelberg. He did not debate the Theses, however, but presided over the debate, held on April 26, 1518, while Leonhard Beier, a fellow Augustinian from Wittenberg, defended the Theses. The content of the Theses as well as Luther's comments greatly impressed some of the younger Augustinians assembled in Heidelberg, while the older brothers generally opposed Luther. No definitive decision regarding Luther and his theology was made in Heidelberg, but the Theses were and have remained a relatively concise but extremely significant articulation of Luther's evangelical theology, especially of his theology of the cross.[1]

Scriptural sources

Martin Luther was a biblical theologian who attempted to explicate the Scriptures in his theological writings. The specific scriptural passages which particularly informed his theology of the cross are Romans 1:19-25, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, and Exodus 33: 18-23. The formative impact of these passages will become apparent in the course of this discussion.

Theology of the cross: central themes

1. The theology of the cross is foremost a theology of justification. Luther's chief purpose in pointing to the cross and its meaning is to proclaim the gospel by articulating his doctrine of justification. He does so particularly by contrasting the theologian of glory and the theologian of the cross, by distinguishing between the alien and the proper work of God, and by presenting his law/gospel dialectic.

Luther offers a concise description of the theologian of glory and the theologian of the cross in Thesis 21: "A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is."[2] What is it that a theologian of glory calls good? It is works, of course, particularly works done to earn merit so that one can bargain with God; works done to contribute to one's salvation, thereby usurp-

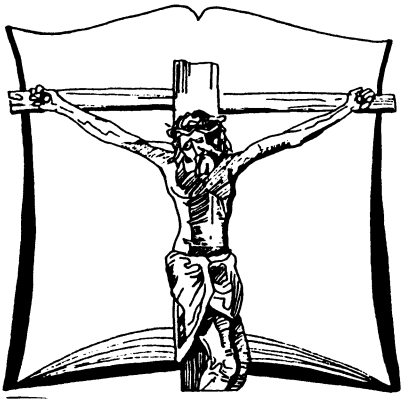
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[1] The Heidelberg Theses may be read in translation in Vol. 31 of *Luther's Works*, hereafter referred to as LW 31. In addition to the Heidelberg Theses, Luther's lectures on Genesis and on the Psalms are further sources of his theology of the cross. The classical discussion of Luther's theology of the cross is Walther von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976). Other important studies are Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1985) and Hubertus Blaumeiser, *Martin Luthers Kreuzestheologie: Schlüssel zu seiner Deutung von Mensch und Wirklichkeit* (Paderborn: Bonifatius, 1995).

[2] LW 31:40.

ing God's role as the sole Savior. The Reformer clarifies this point in his challenging explanation of Thesis 21:

> [The theologian of glory] prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil. These are the people whom the apostle calls "enemies of the cross of Christ" [Phil. 3:18], for they hate the cross and suffering and love works and the glory of works. Thus they call the good of the cross evil and the evil of a deed good.[3]



The church of Luther's day maintained that humans retain their free will, in spite of the fall and of original sin, and that they can therefore do works pleasing to God. Luther responded in Thesis 13: "Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do, it commits a mortal sin."[4] The Nominalist theologians, by whom Luther was trained at the University of Erfurt, argued that even fallen human beings retained a spark of divinity and that they were expected to do what they could (*facere quod in se est*). Only then would they receive the gifts of grace. Luther denied this inherent ability and asserted that the natural human being can only sin. "The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty."[5] The works which this person does are sinful because she is a sinner and because the trust she places in her works is sinful. Thus her sin and her guilt are compounded. While the theologian of glory preaches works and calls them good, such works are not good, no matter how positive their practical effects might be. Rather, they are evil, argues Luther, because they do not let God be God and because they lead people to trust in their own righteousness.

While the theologian of glory "calls evil good and good evil," the theologian of the cross "calls the thing what it actually is."[6] Thus, the theologian of the cross calls works evil, not because they might not be beneficial to another, but because they are done by sinful human beings and because they cannot accomplish what the theologian of glory expects of them. They cannot make a person righteous, merit grace, or earn salvation. Through them the theologian of glory seeks to usurp God's place and role. What, then, does the theologian of the cross call good? Precisely that which the theologian of glory calls evil, namely, humiliation, suffering, dying, the cross. They are called good because it is through them that God saves and that humans are saved. They are good because they are Christ's ways and therefore God's ways. Luther obviously remembers 1 Corinthians 1.

In addition to contrasting the theologian of glory and the theologian of the cross, Luther also points to God's alien and proper work. The point he seeks to make is that God alone saves and God alone justifies,

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[3] LW 31:53.
[4] LW 31:40.
[5] Thesis 16, LW 31:40.
[6] Thesis 21, LW 31:40.

not human beings through their good works. God does so in a dialectical fashion by means of God's dialectical Word—law and gospel. The alien work of God is God's judging and condemning, which God does through the law. Luther explains in his comments on Thesis 4:

> ...the Lord humbles and frightens us by means of the law and the sight of our sins so that we seem in the eyes of men, as in our own, as nothing, foolish, and wicked, for we are in truth that.... And that it is which Isa 28[:21] calls the alien work of God....[7]

The radical effects of the law are clarified even more strikingly in Thesis 23: "The law brings the wrath of God, kills, reviles, accuses, judges, and condemns everything that is not in Christ [Rom 4:15]."[8]

God does God's alien work by means of the law in order to prepare us for God's proper work. Thus both God's alien and God's proper work are done for the same gracious purpose, namely, to save. Luther stresses this point in his explanation of Thesis 4: "[God] humbles us thoroughly, making us despair, so that he may exalt us in his mercy, giving us hope...."[9] Of course, God exalts us through the precious good news of the gospel which proclaims Christ and his redemptive acts on our behalf. Through the gospel God rescues us from our despair, our desire to save ourselves, our state of rebellion, and shows us God's mercy, heals our brokenness, forgives our sins, makes us righteous and transforms us from enemies of God into God's faithful people.

Luther's theology of the cross is, therefore, a theology of justification. That theology is a radical one because the reformer considers it to be nothing less than a faithful proclamation of the gospel which he learned from St. Paul. St. Paul preached Christ crucified, "a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" but "the power of God and the wisdom of God" to God's people (1 Cor 1:23-24). Luther sought to echo St. Paul's message. The gospel about the crucified Christ, about suffering, and about the cross remains a stumbling block and folly to theologians of glory, but it is radical good news to all theologians of the cross. Only theologians of the cross proclaim that gospel because they call the thing what it really is. Thus they call suffering, humiliation, death and the resurrection good because these are God's ways through which God accomplishes humanity's salvation. At the same time, theologians of the cross call all human efforts to save themselves or at least to contribute to their salvation evil because they are human beings' attempts to reject God's ways, to usurp God's place, and to be their own redeemers. Luther's theology challenges theologians of every age to be theologians of the cross, theologians of justification by grace through faith for the sake of Christ apart from the works of the law, in short, theologians of the gospel.

2. The theology of the cross is a theology of revelation. Luther's dialectical way of thinking is also operative in his doctrine of God, specifically as he explores God's self-revelation. The Reformer asserts that God is both hidden and revealed. He explores this notion particularly in the Heidelberg Theses and in *Bondage of the Will*,[10] his challenging response to the respected humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus. Luther's doctrine of revelation is informed especially by Exodus 33:18-23 and by Romans 1:19-25.

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[7] LW 31:44.

[8] LW 31:41.

[9] LW 31:44.

[10] This lengthy treatise, one of Luther's most significant and challenging writings, constitutes volume 33 of *Luther's Works*.

a. God hidden (deus absconditus). Not only does Luther propose the dialectic of God hidden and revealed, but he also explains the hiddenness of God in two ways. In *Bondage of the Will* he asserts that there is much about God that remains hidden, for God has not even revealed it in God's word.[11] Specifically, God's majesty and glory and God's inscrutable will are hidden beyond revelation. Human beings, even believers, dare not seek to explore the mystery of God's majesty because they need not and because God wills that they do not, for God's sake and for their sake. Rather, humans must be satisfied with and focus on how God chooses to be revealed. That revelation is sufficient because it is saving revelation. The story of the encounter of Moses and God recorded in Exodus 33 clearly impacts Luther's thinking. Moses, having been chosen as leader of the people and God's spokesperson, asks to see God's glory—to look into God's face. However, God refuses and indicates that Moses could not bear to see God's glory. God therefore covers Moses' face and passes by him. Only then is Moses allowed to see God, but only the back of God. God is thus gracious to Moses by allowing him to experience a theophany and yet saving him from harm. At the same time, God makes it clear that certain aspects of God's being and will, specifically, God's majesty, must and will remain hidden.

b. God revealed (deus revelatus). In the Heidelberg Theses, Luther also speaks about the hidden and revealed God. However, here Luther stresses that even when God is revealed it is in hiddenness. Luther argues that theologians of the cross are not to focus on the invisible things of God revealed through God's mighty works of creation, those invisible things such as God's "...virtue, godliness, wisdom, justice, goodness, and so forth. The recognition of all these things does not make one worthy or wise."[12] The reason true theologians should not seek the invisible things of God revealed through God's mighty works of creation is explained by Paul in Romans 1. It is because humans have misinterpreted these natural revelations, have not honored God, have become fools while claiming to be wise, and have "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal men or birds or animals or reptiles." Thus God gave them up to their sins "because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Rom 1: 21-25). St. Paul maintains, and Luther agrees, that although God is revealed in the wonders of creation, human beings have misinterpreted that revelation and have become idolaters, making God into their own image rather than recognizing God for who God is and confessing God to be God. For this reason, says Luther, God has chosen to

> The gospel about the crucified Christ remains a stumbling block and folly to theologians of glory, but it is radical good news to all theologians of the cross.

[11] LW 33:140.

[12] Commentary on Thesis 19, LW 31:52.

reveal God's essence in a radically different and surprising way, in visible things, namely, in weakness, in folly, in human nature, in the incarnation and on the cross. The echoes of 1 Corinthians 1 are apparent in Luther's affirmations. The reformer explains in his commentary on Thesis 20:

> Because men misused the knowledge of God through works, God wished again to be recognized in suffering, and to condemn wisdom concerning invisible things by means of wisdom concerning visible things, so that those who did not honor God as manifested in his works should honor him as he is hidden in his suffering. As he says in 1 Cor. 1[:21], "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." Now it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross.[13]

It is crucial to recognize Luther's emphases. God is revealed and wishes to be recognized in the suffering, humility and shame of the cross. However, God is hidden in suffering. Hence God is revealed in hiddenness, and only this revelation is sufficient and redemptive. The theologian of glory seeks to know the invisible things of God, namely, God's glory and majesty, God's wisdom and justice, through the wisdom of natural revelation. However, such a theologian will never know God. The theologian of the cross focuses on the incarnate Christ suffering the shame and humiliation of the cross and in that hidden revelation recognizes God and God's will for humanity.

What kind of God is revealed in the hiddenness of the cross? In Christ theologians of the cross see a God whose divine majesty is clothed in human flesh, who exercises power in weakness, whose glory is shame and humiliation, who brings life by means of death, whose suffering leads to resurrection. It is no wonder that Luther maintains that God is hidden in God's ultimate self-revelation. Who is able to recognize God in the crucified Christ? And yet it is only in the Christ that God wishes to be revealed. It is only through the Christ that God can be known. Luther supports this assertion by recalling Philip's request to Jesus in John 14:8-9: "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied." Jesus response was: "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father...." Luther concludes, therefore: "For this reason true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ...."[14] The theology of the cross is a theology of revelation.

3. The theology of the cross is a theology of faith. The theology of the cross is a theology of faith particularly for two reasons. The first has just been proposed and the second was explored in the first major section of this discussion. The theology of the cross is a theology of faith, first of all, because faith is necessary in order to see and recognize God in God's hidden revelation. Humans are able to recognize God in the incarnation, in suffering, in humility, in shame, in Christ on the cross only when they look with the eyes of faith. It is only through faith that they are able to see God's love and mercy, God's gracious will, and God's wondrous saving acts in Christ. Only faith enables them to recognize that what appears to be folly to humans is actually God's wondrous wisdom, that what is a stumbling block is actually God's message of life and freedom, that the One who appears to be an unfortunate victim is the victorious and living God. The theology of

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[13] LW 31:52-53.
[14] LW 31:53.

the cross is a theology of faith because it is revelatory.

Secondly, the theology of the cross is a theology of faith because it is a theology of justification and of the gospel. The theology of the cross rejects human works as salvific and confesses that God alone can and does redeem humanity and the whole creation. It is only faith which enables humans to affirm that this is so, to trust God's promises, to rely only on God for their life and salvation, to let God be God and to give God all honor and glory. It is only through faith that people are united with Christ and receive all the blessings he has won for them. That faith is created and nurtured by the Holy Spirit through the message of salvation which is the gospel and which is proclaimed by the theologian of the cross. Luther, who is such a theologian, asserts in Thesis 25: "He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ."[15] Furthermore, in his explanation of Thesis 26 he maintains: "For through faith Christ is in us, indeed, one with us. Christ is just and has fulfilled all the commands of God, wherefore we also fulfil everything through him since he was made ours through faith."[16] The theology of the cross is a theology of faith because it is only through faith that human beings recognize God in the Christ, and it is only through faith that they are justified.

4. The theology of the cross is a theology of suffering. It is this aspect of Luther's theology of the cross which has received particular attention in contemporary theological scholarship. Suffering is surely a crucial feature of Luther's theology of the cross, and it has both theocentric and anthropocentric, both divine and human, dimensions. Luther emphasizes in his theology of the cross that God suffers, no matter how scandalous or foolish that may seem. Of course, it was St. Paul who so powerfully impressed on Luther that God's saving acts required humility, emptying, shameful treatment, weakness, loneliness, physical and emotional suffering and even death before resurrection and victory were possible. It was God in Christ who chose to suffer this way so that the power and punishment of sin might be overcome and the divine-human relationship might be restored. Suffering is, therefore, redemptive, and the theology of the cross is a theology of suffering because it proclaims God as the suffering Redeemer.

Suffering is a reality, indeed, a necessity in the life of the believer.

It is also a theology of suffering because it asserts that suffering is a reality, indeed, a necessity in the life of the believer. That should not be a surprise. If suffering is Christ's way it is also the Christian's way. There are a number of things that should be said about Luther's understanding of suffering.

a. Luther was not a masochist. He did not seek physical or spiritual suffering. He was, however, a person of profound faith who experienced a good deal of suffering—physical, emotional and spiritual. *Anfechtungen*, spiritual struggles, were a persistent part of his life, and he expected that they would be of every Christian's life.

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[15] LW 31:41.
[16] LW 31:56.

b. Suffering is God's will, but it is not an indication of God's anger or rejection. Instead, it is a sign of God's love and acceptance.

c. God does not simply allow suffering and then watch from a distance. Rather, God always stands with the one who suffers. Even Christ experienced forsakenness on the cross. The sense of being alone and forsaken while suffering is quite natural. However, God did not forsake Christ and does not forsake the believer. God knows what it means to suffer and suffers with God's people. God hangs on their crosses with them.

d. Suffering is the lot of the individual but also of the whole community of faith. Luther emphasized, therefore, that the cross is one of the marks of the church.[17]

e. Suffering is redemptive. This is not to say that their suffering redeems human beings and that they are saved through and because of their suffering. Rather, it is redemptive in this sense: Christians will suffer when they faithfully follow Christ and faithfully proclaim the gospel in word and in loving action.[18] That proclamation through word and deed will be used by the Holy Spirit to create and nurture faith in others and thereby to bring life and salvation. Suffering is redemptive also in a very practical sense. Luther maintains that people are able to hear the good and freeing news of the gospel only when they cease to be theologians of glory, become aware of their sinfulness and helplessness, and recognize and admit that they cannot be their own saviors. Theologically speaking, that happens when God confronts them with the law. Practically and experientially, it may well happen through suffering, suggests Luther, for suffering, perhaps as nothing else, makes people aware of their limitations, their weakness, their mortality, their dependence, their finiteness, their humanity. Only then are they ready to hear and to recognize God's radical good news. Luther clarifies this point in his explanation of Thesis 24:

> ...he who has not been brought low, reduced to nothing through the cross and suffering, takes credit for works and wisdom and does not give credit to God. He thus misuses and defiles the gifts of God. He, however, who has been emptied [Cf. Phil 2:7] through suffering no longer does works but knows that God works and does all things in him. For this reason, whether man does works or not, it is all the same to him. He neither boasts if he does good works, nor is he disturbed if God does not do good works through him. He knows that it is sufficient if he suffers and is brought low by the cross in order to be annihilated all the more. It is this that Christ says in John 3[:7], "You must be born anew." To be born anew, one must consequently first die and then be raised up with the Son of Man.[19]

f. As these words of Luther indicate, *suffering is never the final experience of believers.* Resurrection, wholeness, and life are their final destiny, for if they suffer because they are people of faith who follow the way of Christ then they will also share in Christ's marvelous victory. The theology of the cross is a theology of suffering because it is a theology of life and salvation.

5. The theology of the cross is a theology for the Christian life. The reasons for this assertion are diverse and may be summarized in the following way. The theology of the cross brings life because it is, in its essence, a proclamation of the gospel. It brings freedom, for it emancipates humans

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[17] "On the Councils and the Church," LW 41:164-5.

[18] LW 41:165.

[19] LW 31:55.

from their self-reliance and their self-preoccupation. It frees them from their efforts to earn salvation and to bargain with God. Only then are they able to do works which are truly good, that is, pleasing to God. These are the works of love inspired by faith and done to the glory of God and in the service of the neighbor. The theology of the cross lets God be God. Human beings do not have to rely on their own speculations about God and God's will for them, for the theology of the cross points them to Christ who is their Redeemer, who grants them his gifts freely and graciously and who is God's ultimate self-revelation. When people are theologians of the cross they do not usurp God's place and do not make God into their own image. Rather, they recognize God's will and trust God's promises in and through the Christ. The theology of the cross provides perspective on the meaning and significance of suffering. It calls believers to a life of humility, of service, and of love, and it clarifies who people of faith are and whose they are.

Conclusion

The theology of the cross is not simply the central theme in the thought of a fascinating historical figure and a creative theologian of the church. It points to the very heart of the scriptural message and proclaims Christ crucified. This Christ is a stumbling block and folly to the theologian of glory, but to the theologian of the cross he is the living and incarnate God who brings life and salvation. Luther was a theologian of the cross because he had experienced the power of the gospel in his own life and because he firmly believed that the gospel was God's ultimate gracious word to humanity.

Whatever else it is and does, a theology for the twenty-first century must be realistic about the human condition, clarify the divine-human relationship, bring freedom, and be life-giving and life-sustaining. In short, it must be radical good news. If it is, then it will not be simply a theology for a specific historical moment. Rather, it will transcend and transform any particular time or place or human experience, and it will bring meaning, comfort and hope. The theology of the cross is such a theology.

Israel/Today's Believers and the Nations: Three Test Cases

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Among the many highlights of his long presidency at LSTC, William E. Lesher has excelled in the "globalization" of theological education. Back in the 1980s he sought ways to develop the seminaries and colleges of Africa so that they might be ready to prepare leaders for their growing churches. Subsequently, he headed up the Globalization Task Force of the Association of Theological Schools and helped North American seminaries relate their curricula to issues like the omnipresence of poverty in the world, the contributions of the other great world religions, and the meaning of mission under these conditions. He not only supported an expanded scholarship program for the many international doctoral students at LSTC, but he also recognized and attended to their physical needs and welcomed their contributions to theological discussions. Under his leadership a Hispanic Ministries Program was started, and now flourishes.

This essay explores the theme of globalization by reviewing three occasions when Israel's life intersected with that of its neighbors, and when its response to these "others" was characterized by ambivalence and ambiguity and by courageous hope that would not settle for the status quo. While none of these test cases has an exact modern counterpart, these struggles by the biblical writers to do justice, practice loyalty, and to live humbly (Mic 6:8)—toward God and the nations—may help us all to develop a theology and ministry appropriate to the 21st century.

The case of Jonah

Forget about his boat ride and the fish for now, and consider instead Jonah's activity in the city of Nineveh. The book of Jonah makes Nineveh bigger than Chicago—it took a person three days to walk across (3:3). And Jonah's eight word sermon (five in Hebrew) contained neither law nor gospel, only doom: "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" The king of Nineveh recognized a crisis when he saw

one and immediately went into mourning and imposed total abstinence from food and water on the entire human population and on the animals. He ordered the people and the animals to put on sackcloth for mourning, to pray, and to change their violent lifestyles (3:6-9). He was willing to wager that God would relent and change his mind if he saw the city in repentance. Surely, God would not decide to carry out his judgment on those who recognized their sinfulness. The king won his bet: God did change his mind (3:10).

To understand this story, one has to remember two things about Nineveh. First, Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and it richly deserved a reputation for cruelty in war and excessive punishment in its criminal justice system. An Assyrian man who charged his wife with adultery could cut off her nose and castrate the man whom he suspected (ANET 181). Second, Assyria destroyed the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C.E. and nearly finished off Judah when Sennacherib invaded Judah in 701 B.C.E. Citizens of the ancient Near East in general and Israelites in particular did not feel kindly disposed toward Nineveh.

Jonah was outraged at the undeserved forgiveness shown to Nineveh by God and felt vindicated in his original decision not to go to Nineveh at all. He knew it all along: Yahweh was gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in loyal love, and ready to change his mind about imposing judgment on cities like Nineveh. Jonah asked God, who had just restored the Ninevites to life, to take his own life from him (4:2-3). Instead, God appointed a miraculous bush to grow up in one day and give Jonah shade, and then God appointed a worm to attack the bush and destroy it. God's third appointment brought a sultry east wind to blow against Jonah. That wind and the hot sun were enough to cause Jonah to ask for death a second time (4:6-8).

"Is anger the right response, Jonah?" God asked.

"I'm so mad that I would just as soon die," Jonah replied (4:9).

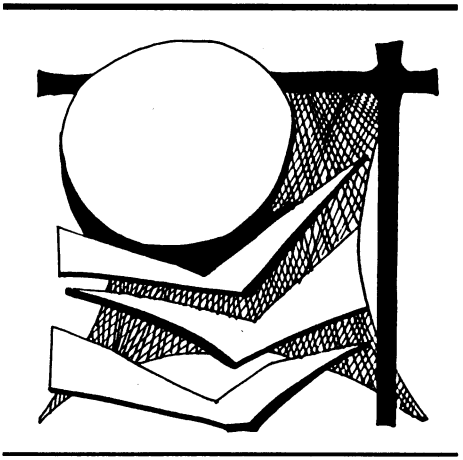
"You showed compassion for the bush, on which you did not work and which you did not make grow. It shot up in one night and perished in one night. Should I not show compassion for that great metropolis, Nineveh, in which there are more than 120,000 people who don't know the difference between their right and left hands, not to mention their many animals?" (4:10-11)

Yahweh tells us that Jonah showed compassion for the plant *qua* plant and contrasts that with his own behavior. While Yahweh had responded positively to the repentance of Nineveh in chapter 3, in the last verse of the book he shows compassion on Nineveh simply because it is a big city, a dumb city at that, and one with a lot of animals. Readers can choose between a theology of repentance and a theology of compassion, or they can decide that both are right.

The book of Jonah ends with a rhetorical question. It really does not matter how Jonah might have answered Yahweh's question since it is we the readers who are put on the spot. What does this open-ended question at the end of Jonah say to us about a theology of mission or a theology of the religions? Is it right for Yahweh to show compassion?

The case of Dinah

The story of Dinah in Genesis 34 does not let the reader off any easier. If she was raped by a foreigner named Shechem, as a majority of commentators believe, the compassionate reader notes a number of strange, even hideous turns of events. We never hear, for example, what Dinah thought of



the incident or the haggling about a marriage price that went on between her attacker and his father, on the one hand, and her father and brothers, on the other. Shechem seems to be the completely abusive male, having his own way sexually and then professing his love and many "sweet nothings" to the one he has violated (v. 3). For most of the story Dinah seems to have stayed with Shechem (v. 17, v. 26), the very man who had attacked her. Her father Jacob seems either weak and indecisive when he waits for his sons to come home before doing anything himself (v. 5), or he only is worried about his own reputation when his hot-headed sons murder all the men in the foreign city, pillage all its goods, and kidnap the city's wives for themselves (vv. 25-29). Dinah seems to be a classic victim of rape or even of date rape. The story in this telling offers no helpful words for female—or male—readers. We all do well to be angry about this incident.

There is an alternate interpretation of the story that allows us to enter the discussion at another point. In this telling, the issue is not about rape at all but about whether we the readers are ready to be open to the "other." Dinah models such openness since she voluntarily goes out to visit the women of the region (v. 1). The crux of this interpretation rests in the translation of v. 2. No one denies that Shechem "took her" and "lay with her," but the NRSV's addition of "by force" may miss the whole point. What was controversial about the sexual liaison of Shechem and Dinah is that it brought shame or defilement on Dinah, at least in the view of some of the characters in the story, because it was a relationship that crossed ethnic boundaries.

Shechem and his father Hamor actually live up to their royal stature (v. 2) by offering to pay a bride price without any limits (v. 12) and by eagerly agreeing to persuade the men of their town to be circumcised in order to facilitate marital and economic relationships (vv. 18-24). Shechem, the cross-cultural pioneer, was the most honored person in his family (v. 19). Jacob is cautious, but finally a public, if passive, advocate of breaking down ethnic barriers (v. 5, v. 30). Simeon and Levi are the really bad guys in this reading. They are indignant because their sister had crossed cultural boundaries (v. 7); they proposed circumcision to Shechem and Hamor deceitfully since they knew that this would give them a window of opportunity to attack Shechem's city when all the men were disabled by the operation's aftermath. They threatened to take Dinah back if Shechem and Hamor would not agree to their outrageous demand, only to take her back anyway when they double crossed their dialogue partners (vv. 17, 26). In addition to their murder and pillaging of the city, they kidnapped all the women they could. If there is rape in the story, they are the ones who do it.

This alternate, somewhat controversial reading permits a new understanding of the dilemma posed by the final verses of the chapter (vv. 30-31). As the ancestral re-

ceiver of the promise, Jacob, like Abraham and Sarah, is obligated to be a blessing to all the families of the earth (cf. Gen 12:1-3). No wonder he protests what his sons have done. Through their violent actions they have made the name Jacob stink to his Canaanite neighbors. Why would anyone look to him as someone blessed or someone able to be a blessing?

But Simeon and Levi have the last word: "Should our sister be treated like a whore?" (v. 31) The question is puzzling since prostitution was not the issue in either interpretation of the story. Some commentators argue that Shechem was in fact willing to pay (v. 12) and Jacob's family appeared willing to be paid even if their apparent bargaining was double-dealing (vv. 13-16). Bechtel argues, however, that the reference to a "whore" refers to the marginal status of Dinah in that society. A prostitute is a person who engages in sexual relations without the possibility of bonding to her sexual partners; they are merely customers. In the view of Simeon and Levi, this charge fit their sister. She was linked sexually to a foreigner Shechem, but in their view such a relationship was outlawed, incapable of consummation, a shame, yes, even pollution.

If this interpretation of the story is correct, readers are faced with a dilemma. The patriarch Jacob admonishes his sons for their refusal to cross ethnic boundaries and charges that their violence threatens the very life of the whole family. The brothers ask, "Should such cross-cultural relationships be carried on?"

As in Jonah, the final question goes unanswered. Ancient and modern readers must wrestle with two powerful arguments, one for inter-ethnic marriage (by Jacob), one opposed to it (by Simeon and Levi). Rather than resolving the issue, the author of Genesis 34 forces all subsequent readers to debate, to rethink the implications of the faith, and then to make a choice.

The case of Nehemiah 9

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are not the first place one would normally look for a discussion of multiculturality or globalization. Ezra 9-10 brings up the problem of intermarriage, and Ezra's solution is drastic and painful, hard to justify. He leads the community through a rite in which more than 100 men are forced to divorce their foreign wives and disown their children, resulting in personal and financial hardship. It is possible that Persian policy required this drastic action and that exogamos marriages could have threatened the community's right to the land, but such interpretations seem defensive. The canon as a whole is more welcoming to the outsider. The book of Ruth celebrates the character and piety of a remarkable Moabite woman and sees her incorporation in the ancestry of David as a decided credit to Israel's greatest king (despite Deut 23:3!). Some scholars, past and present, believe that the book of Ruth was written precisely to be a counter-argument to the actions of Ezra. Even elsewhere in Ezra and Nehemiah there is a much more positive attitude to outsiders who wanted to join the community (Ezr 6:21; Neh 10:28).

The overall environment at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah limited the political options for the post-exilic community. The principal authors of the books knew that rebellion against the Persian Empire would be foolish and suicidal. There is no talk in the book about a messiah or a new conquest of the land. Instead, Ezra 1 describes the Persian emperor Cyrus as a leader stirred up by Yahweh to issue a proclamation that authorized the Jews to return home from the Babylonian exile and to rebuild the temple.

When opponents tried to stop the temple building (chap. 4), the Jews appealed to the Persian king Darius, who checked his records and allowed the building to continue, with a generous subsidy from the empire itself (chap. 6). Ezra and Nehemiah were sent by Persian authorities to reform the community. Ezra's (re)introduction of the Pentateuch, if that is what his law book was in chap. 7, may have given this religious document official standing in the Persian empire. Ezra's and Nehemiah's activities in Jerusalem and Judah gave the Persians a safe outpost in the vicinity of always-rebellious-and-dangerous Egypt, and the Jews won the right for an undisturbed worship of Yahweh. It was a win-win situation for the Jews and the Persians, but the price was relatively high: for the sake of an undisturbed right to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem, the post-exilic community agreed to be a Persian colony.

God's greatest gift is the transcendence of all cultural, ethnic, political, and religious boundaries.

While this is the overall tone of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Nehemiah 9 offers another opinion. Here a new, anonymous voice, mistakenly identified as Ezra in the NRSV (v. 6), offers a great prayer of repentance (9:5b-37) that challenges the central political position of the rest of the book.

The prayer recites God's providential care in creation (v. 6), in the election of Abraham (vv. 7-8), and in the Exodus from Egypt (vv. 9-11). During all this time there was no hint of human infidelity. The next paragraphs describe God's providential care during the wilderness wanderings (vv. 12-15), the rebellions of the ancestors (vv. 16-18), and God's continued guidance in spite of their rebellion (vv. 19-21).

Verses 22-31 go on to review the life of the ancestors of the post-exilic community during their stay in the land. After the dramatically successful conquest (vv. 22-25), the people became disobedient and were punished, they prayed, and they received divine deliverance during the period of the judges (vv. 26-28). Life under the monarchy is described very briefly, but God's mercy and righteousness have endured down to the present day (vv. 29-31). Throughout their life in the land there was a cycle of sin and punishment, followed by petition and deliverance.

The final paragraph of chap. 9, speaking for the post-exilic community, asks for the cycle leading to deliverance to be resumed. First, there is a petition (v. 32), then a confession of sins (vv. 33-35), and finally a complaint about their present condition that functions as a kind of appeal for God to act, based on pity for them (vv. 36-37). In this last paragraph, the speakers admit that they have not served God and so they now have rightly become slaves (vv. 35-36). Ironically, the land God gave to the ancestors for enjoyment has become the place for their own enslavement. Because of taxation and tribute, the rich yield of this land now goes to the kings that have been imposed on them as punishment (contrast Ezr 1:1). These kings have "power over our bodies and over our livestock." While the

speakers freely admit that they are sinners, they also acknowledge that they are in great distress (v. 37) and they beg God for relief.

Some people can tolerate foreign domination and make a virtue out of it, as did the principal authors of Ezra and Nehemiah. But at least for some within Israel, including the author of Nehemiah 9—and for many people today—such slavery could not be tolerated. The alien kings ruled the bodies and the cattle of those who prayed in chap. 9, in accord only with what was pleasing to these rulers.

What moves God to act? Is it our praise, his character, his promises? "You are the LORD, you alone" is the way the poem begins in v. 6. But the poem ends with "we"—we the slaves, we the exploited, we who are in great distress (vv. 36-37). Is not God moved by pity for us? You, God, are one half of the issue; we are the other half. You and we—in that connection lies hope for the author of Nehemiah 9. This person could never settle for the miserable status quo and make a virtue of it; this person demanded and expected divine intervention in the here and now. This "secondary hand" worked a spirit of liberation into an otherwise complacent text.

Conclusion

How we relate to others has never been an easy question. Nor is there in the Bible any glossing over the difficulties of communication across generations or across ethnic divisions. Theology and ministry in the 21st century C.E., as in many centuries B.C.E., require a daring spirit that recognizes that God's greatest gift is the transcendence of all cultural, ethnic, political, and religious boundaries. Heirs of Bill Lesher will not just repeat his many global initiatives; they will take them to their logical, evangelical and ecumenical, conclusions or next steps. St. Paul still has it right: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

Paul: All Things to All People—Flexible and Welcoming

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Appreciation of diversity has been a hallmark of William Lesher's leadership at the Lutheran School of Theology. He has been a strong proponent of cultural diversity, social justice, the common good, and global, multicultural dimensions in theological education. In this brief essay I mean to honor him by examining the seeming contradiction between rigid exclusivity and the welcoming of diversity in Paul, especially in 1 Corinthians.

The Roman empire, in terms of religion, was an inclusive, multicultural society. Cities accepted multiple cults which emigrated over the empire from the east. Exclusivity was unknown in religion, except for the Jews. To take only one city as an example, the forum in Roman Corinth had temples to Apollo, Hera Akraia, Dionysos and Aphrodite, to the oracular god Apollo from Claros, to Osiris [and Isis] from Egypt, to the Tyche of the city, and possibly to the Ephesian Artemis, while the precinct of the healing god Asklepios lay at the northwest corner of the city and the precinct dedicated to Demeter and Kore lay to the south of the forum on the north slope of the Acro-Corinth. The temple of Isis at Cenchraea was the scene for the conversion of Lucius to the Egyptian goddess in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius.[1] A Jewish synagogue testifies to the presence of Judaism. Other cities, such as Rome, Ostia, and Pompei, had an even richer presence of motley religions. Add the competing philosophic schools and teachers of rhetoric, and a city in the early Roman empire appears willing to embrace many religions and philosophies competing for adherents. As a new religion, Christianity was not a threat to the Roman authorities. Outside of the scapegoating of Christians by Nero in Rome after the great fire of 64 C.E., there was no formal opposition to or persecution of Christianity by Roman emperors or their agents until the second century, when first one can document the juridical basis for defining Christianity as a crime in Trajan's rescript to the request of

[1] See Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983) and Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

Pliny, the Roman governor of Bythinia, about the year 110 C.E.[2] Christians appeared to be *atheoi* (atheists), because they held that all the gods, including the Roman emperor, were not gods at all, but "men writ large" or demons.

Paul was a Mediterranean person, emotionally volatile, blunt and forthright in opposing threats to his gospel—and demanding exclusive devotion to the God and Father of Jesus. 1 Thess 1:9-10 reflects his missionary proclamation in a Greek city: "How you turned to God from images to serve a God who is alive and authentic, and to await his son from the heavens, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, the one who rescues us from the wrath that is on the way." Paul did not add another enrichment possibility to the menu of gods and religions, but called Christians to serve one God alone and the Lord. 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 is instructive:

> Therefore about food that comes from things sacrificed to images [statues, *eidola*] we know "Eidola have no existence in the cosmos" and "There is no god except the One." For, even if in fact there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or upon earth, just as there are many gods and many lords,
>
> still for us there is one God,
> the Father
> from whom are all things [the universe] and we toward him,
> and one Lord, Jesus Christ,
> through whom are all things
> and we through him.

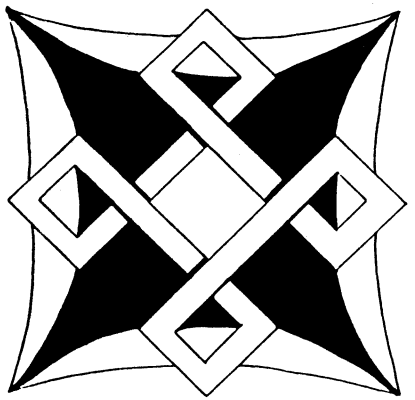
Paul recognized the existence of many gods and many lords, yet called the Corinthians to avoid all participation in the cultic meals held in the Corinthian temples of Asklepios and Demeter (1 Corinthians 8-10). He must have appeared very narrow, exclusivist to the non-Christian population of Corinth—if they noticed him at all.

At times he also appears highly inflexible within the Christian community, arguing as though he alone understands what the gospel is and excluding all who differ with him. In Gal 1:6-10 he pronounces an anathema on anyone who proclaims a different gospel (they are Christians), and points out how he publicly rebuked even Peter for his vacillating on the matter of eating with Gentiles when Jerusalem Jewish Christians come to Antioch (Gal 2:11-15). Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 10-13 excoriates his Christian opponents with harsh language: "false apostles, treacherous workers, fake apostles of Christ" (2 Cor 11:13) and "super-apostles" (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11). In his later letter to the Philippians he explodes in anger against his opponents: "Look out for the dogs, look out for the evil-workers, look out for the excision" (a pun on "circumcision," Phil 3:2). The last phrase recalls his earlier harsh bit of humor in Gal 5:12, when he grimly said of those who asked the Galatians to get themselves circumcised: "Would that those who are upsetting you would cut themselves off!" He wishes the knife would slip and circumcision would turn into excision.[3] Paul regularly uses such sarcastic word play and sarcasm in polemical contexts (cf. Phil 3:19).

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[2] See Pliny, *Epp* 10.96 and 97. The basic modern study of the evidence is T. D. Barnes, "Legislation against the Christians," *Journal of Roman Studies* 58 (1968) 32-50. The article by D. S. Potter, "Persecution of the Early Church," *ABD* 5, 231-35 is a useful summary with additional bibliography.

[3] Hans Freiherr von Campenhausen, "Ein Witz des Apostels Paulus und die Anfänge des christlichen Humors," *Aus der Frühzeit des Christentums. Studien zur Kichengeschichte des ersten und zweiten Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1963) calls it "ein grausiger Witz" and comments: "Paul describes them in their zeal for circumcision as semi-castration" (p. 104, my translation).



His language that urges the Corinthians to implement his decision to exclude the man living with his father's woman in 1 Cor 5:1-5 is highly ironic: "turn him over to Satan that his *pneuma* may be saved on the day of the Lord." The Corinthians apparently had boasted that this man really understood what baptism that conferred the Spirit meant for life. Paul appears harsh, rigid, and uncompromising in his insisting that he alone has the true gospel in the Christian community.

Yet, Paul seems self-contradictory, internally inconsistent. His words in 1 Cor 9:19-27 are especially striking. Here he seems to have lost that stark inflexibility in a kind of spineless, chameleon-like willingness to correlate himself with whatever environment he finds himself.

> For, although I am free from all, I enslaved myself to all in order to gain more. And so I became as a Jew for the Jews, in order to gain Jews; for those under law [Torah] as one under law [Torah], though not myself under law [Torah], that I might gain those under law [Torah]; for those without law [Torah] as one without law [Torah], although I am not without law of God, but rather in Christ's law, in order that I might gain those without law [Torah]; I became for the weak weak that I might gain the weak. For all I became all things, that in all ways I might save some. Now I do all things because of the gospel, that I might be its partner.

As Jean Héring said, "this passage has considerable historical importance...."[4] It is a key both to Paul's devotion to proclamation and to his own personal life. One might infer from 1 Cor 7:17-24 that a Jew should remain a Jew; Paul says there that neither circumcision or non-circumcision, slavery or freedom are something. So each should stay in the position he was in when called. That would imply that a Jew should stay a Jew, not simply in ethnicity, but also in religious devotion! Yet Paul in our passage gives up his Jewishness in order to vary his life style. What prevents this from being either mere opportunism or spineless vacillation? It has appeared that way to some. P. Richardson compares Paul's attitude here to Peter's in Gal 2:11-14, and speaks of Paul's inconsistency.[5]

How can the exclusive, uncompromising Paul of 1 Corinthians 5 be so open to difference a few pages later? Is he ultimately a kind of crowd pleaser who says or does whatever is necessary to win his audience? He himself expressly denies this in 1 Thess 2:3-7:

> For our exhortation does not arise out of error or from impurity or in deceit, but just as we were approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, that's how we

[4] Jean Héring, *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*, tr. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: The Epworth Press, 1962), 81. Héring says this in relation to the question of whether Paul continued "to observe the Law as a discipline after his conversion to the Gospel."

[5] P. Richardson, "Pauline Inconsistency," *NTS* 26 (1980) 347-62.

> speak, not as trying to please people, but the God who tests our hearts. For we were not ever present with a flattering speech, as you know, nor on the pretext of profit (God be our witness), nor seeking a reputation from people, not from you or from others, although having the power to use weight [position, authority] as apostles of Christ. But we were mild among you, as if a [professional wet-] nurse were fondling her own children....

Paul also manifests strong inclusive tendencies and multi-cultural influence elsewhere in his writings. His starting point in all his letters is confession of Jesus as God's agent. This can take various linguistic or theological forms. In some contexts he stresses the cross: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus as Anointed—and crucified, at that" (1 Cor 2:2; cf. 1:18; Gal 3:1). The confession *kyrios Iesous* ("Jesus is Lord") appears in many letters: "If you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart 'God raised him from the dead,' you will be saved" (Rom 10:9-10). Paul urges this confession in 1 Cor 12:3, and regards it as the basic cosmic confession in Phil 2:11. He identifies this confession as gospel, good news which he is under obligation to bring to both Jew and Gentile, to Greek and barbarian (Rom 1:14-17). While Rom 1:2-4 stresses the resurrection of Jesus as the gospel, 1 Cor 15:3-5 emphasizes Jesus' death. This stress on the gospel runs throughout his authentic letters; it shapes his attitudes, forms his decisions, determines his oppositions and leads him both to an affirmation of the validity of variety and to fight an individualism that expresses itself in free-wheeling self-promotion.

Paul, from the moment of his conversion, knew that God, who had set him apart from birth, revealed his son in him in order that he might announce him as good news to the Gentiles, recognized that he had received "grace and apostleship for the obedience of faith among all the gentiles on behalf of his [Jesus'] name" (Rom 1:5). From that time on Paul lost his earlier, narrow ethnocentrism because of the gospel. He spent himself in the cities of the eastern Roman empire.

But he did not disown his past. He still took pride in his personal identity as one born into Judaism (Phil 3:5-6; 2 Cor 11:22) and would, when pressed, brag about his Jewishness.[6] He identifies himself (along with Peter) as a "Jew by nature" (Gal 2:15). He had been successful as a law-observant Jew: "measured by righteousness in the Torah, blameless" (Phil 3:6), "zealous in full measure for the ancestral traditions" (Gal 1:14). His devotion to his Jewishness had turned him into a persecutor of the church (Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6). Even as missionary to the Gentiles he recognizes the special blessings the Jewish people had received from God: sonship, glory, covenants, giving of the law, the worship of God, promises, ancestors, and the Anointed One so far as ethnicity is concerned (Rom 9:4-5). He remained conscious of the differences between Jews and non-Jews, even in the matter of how God justifies them in a

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[6]This comes out most clearly in 2 Corinthians 11-12, in a manner that agrees with the slightly later treatise of Plutarch of Chaeronea, "On Praising Oneself Inoffensively," *Plutarch's Moralia* vol. VII, ed. Phillip H. De Lacy and Benedict Einarson. LCL (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959) 109-67. Frederick W. Danker makes effective use of Plutarch in *II Corinthians*, ACNT (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989). See also Mario Di Cicco, *Paul's Use of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in 2 Corinthians 10-13* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Mellon Biblical Press, 1995) 58-63, *et passim.*

different manner: the circumcision out of fidelity (*pistis*) and the uncircumcision through faith (*pistis*; Rom 3:30). Paul did not cease to be a Jew after he "had seen the Lord" (1 Cor 9:1);[7] the Jews were still his "kinfolk according to the flesh"—and he agonized over the failure of many Jews to believe in Jesus (Romans 9-11).[8] Paul's wrestling with this problem is still foundational for a Christian evaluation of Judaism. Paul does not espouse a supercessionist position!

Paul not only preached the leveling power of the gospel; he lived it.

But his apostolate also effected a drastic change in his reading of his Jewish tradition, for he argues out of that tradition that God saves Jew and non-Jew alike into a community of mutual affection and responsibility. The gospel is therefore universal, for all. He holds that the Jewish confession of faith in "one God" implies that God saves circumcision and uncircumcision alike by *pistis*, understood as fidelity to the promise in relation to Jews and as faith in relation to non-Jews (Rom 3:29-30). And that is not an annulment of the Torah (Rom 3:31), but the placing of the Torah in its proper place.

Paul argues the same universality out of the story of the patriarch of Judaism, Abraham, who received the promise to be the father of many nations before he was circumcised, i.e. when he was "godless" (*asebēs*, Rom 4:5). Thus faith is the qualification to be Abraham's seed. Paul does not hold that Christian Jews cease to be Jews, nor does he argue that they must give up their Jewish fidelity to the Torah and the observance of its cultic and covenant requirements.

But he does insist that his gospel inclusivity wipes out the major distinctions that run through ancient (and modern) society. "There is not Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female" (Gal 3:28); rather all belong to Christ, Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise. Ethnicity, social status, and gender no longer are divisive. Thus Paul argues for equality in sexual relations of the genders in marriage (1 Cor 7:1-6), assumes that women will prophesy and lead in prayer (1 Cor 11:2-16), and holds that race no longer gives any priority to people before God. (Paul does not, it is true, extend this into a radical critique of the social or economic structures of his day. He never critiques the social injustice of a slave-based economy or argues against the Ro-

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[7] Alan Segal writes: "Paul is not simply a newly formed gentile convert to Christendom; rather, he remains a knowledgeable Jew representing, endorsing, and furthering the gentile mission." *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 12.

[8] The literature on this question is immense. See Johannes Munck, *Christ and Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9-11* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967); Hans Hübner, *Gottes Ich und Israel: zum Schriftgebrauch des Paulus in Römer 9–11*. FRLANT 136 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984); James C. Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul's Letter to the Romans: Changing Self-Definition in Earliest Christianity* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993) 67-92; and Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, & Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), *passim*, esp. 285-316.

man principate as a form of political oppression.)

Paul's radicality in this attitude is set in sharp focus if one recalls how ancient society was organized around status (conceived of in terms of dyadic personality). One's race, wealth, family line, status as a benefactor of others conferred *dignitas* in the Roman world, made one *endoxos* in the Greek.[9] Paul's insights in Gal 3:28-29, while applying in the first instance to the Christian community, are ultimately as socially disruptive—and inclusive of the marginalized—as Jesus' eating with tax collectors and sinners. When Paul says that he "enslaves himself" to all, he uses terminology that carried overtones about the lowest possible status in the Early Roman Empire.[10] Paul not only preached the leveling power of the gospel; he lived it.

1 Corinthians shows the practical effects of Paul's understanding of gospel. Greater intelligence or superiority of knowledge (*gnosis*) does not give greater status. Paul is consistent when he fights against individualism in the church—even as he recognizes the freedom the gospel brings. The parade case surfaces in 1 Corinthians in the matter of eating food that came from sacrifices on altars dedicated to "gods and lords" (1 Corinthians 8-10). The Corinthian who has superior knowledge about the religions of Corinth is not free to do as she or he pleases about eating. Rather the tender faith of the weakest becomes the boundary to liberty, otherwise "The weak person is being destroyed by your knowledge, the Christian compatriot (*adelphos*) for whom Christ died" (1 Cor 8:11). The boundary to personal liberty is the death of Christ on behalf of the weakest, poorest, most marginalized person.

Paul's letters also reflect variety in the life of the Christian community. He does not call his readers to a uniformity of theological formulation or a common set of theological affirmations. He is concerned about unity in local gatherings of Christians, but not about uniformity. The variety of creedal formulations in Paul is striking. Some letters argue largely from Old Testament precedents (Romans, Galatians); others almost totally disregard the Old Testament (1 Thessalonians; in large measure Philippians). Paul allows for different forms of community structure and maintenance. In 1 Thessalonians Paul speaks of leadership almost in passing (1 Thess 5:12-13) and then urges the entire community to do the work of community maintenance and all alike to test all things. Galatians reflects little community structure. Romans 12:3-8 lists a variety of gifts in the Roman community, without institutionalizing them in ordered forms of ministry (no names that later become clerical). 1 Cor 12:27-31 begins as if it is a list of officials (apostles, prophets, teachers), but ends with a list of gifts that are not institutionalized, in a manner close to

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[9] Paul Zanker gives a good graphic that illustrates this social pyramid in *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, tr. Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999) fig. 121, interpreted on pp. 151-53. See also Richard Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 7-41, and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Patronage in Roman society: from republic to empire," pp. 63-87 in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London and New York: Routledge, 1989). James S. Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) concentrates on post-Pauline Christianity in Rome but has many penetrating insights that also apply to the period in which Paul writes.

[10] See Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 1-49.

Romans. The reference to *episkopoi* (bishops, overseers) and *dikonoi* (deacons, servants) in Phil 1:1 is puzzling.[11] Paul does not appeal to them for action either against the problematic people in chapter 3 or in the case of Euodias and Syntyche in Phil 4:2-4. Pauline churches demonstrate the variety and inclusivity of Paul's gospel; Paul mentions no ethnic group negatively.

Paul exemplifies this openness of the gospel in the passage from 1 Corinthians 9 with which we began. It is precisely his commitment to the universal gospel that effectively makes him open and adaptable to different groups of people. He is not wishy-washy, but evangelical. This inclusive multiculturality is summed up in the great paragraph that concludes Paul's discussion of the strong and the weak in Romans. He says, "Therefore welcome (receive, accept) one another, just as Christ also received you, to the glory of God" (Rom 15:7).[12] Paul could be as open as he was because of the character of Christ's work, which offered God's mercy to Jew and Gentile, to weak and strong alike. In that way God is glorified. Paul's working out of this inclusive stance in the church for the sake of the gospel models the theological method that still has validity today as Christians confront problems of racism, injustice, economic and social status seeking at the end of this millennium and move into the next. As Paul might well say, *soli deo gloria, propter Christum in ecclesia pro mundo.*

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[11] It is unlikely that these terms were already technical, ecclesial terms.

[12] See the discussion in Robert Jewett's stimulating book, *Christian Tolerance: Paul's Message to the Modern Church* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), 23-42.

The Issue of Power/ Authority in the Global Church of the 21st Century

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Theologians of all cultures, from "ebony to ivory," seem to agree that the church is a fellowship of believers who respond positively in faith to the call of God in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to serve not only God but God's people. The church exists, then, where people hear the Word, gather around the sacraments, and do the work of liberation/salvation, where the Lordship of Christ is affirmed, and where people take responsibility for God's world. Through baptism we move from denominational, national, ethnic, racial, and sexual ties to an allegiance in the family of Christ, in which water is stronger than blood.

We call all of humanity to experience the gifts of God's power in word and sacraments as the unending love event which inseparably unites us with God and all of creation in fellowship and holy communion.

Theologians seem to agree on the theological and biblical maxims that all power rests in God and that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all. What, then, is the issue with this power and authority in the church? The issues for this reflective paper are how Christians externalize their identity as the church of God and how they exercise power. According to Lutheranism, power and authority are perceived and exercised through the doctrines of Law and Gospel.

One of the most explosive issues in the area of power/authority is that of clergy power and its negative use resulting, for example, in sexual exploitation. Another issue is the church's execution of its power/authority in making ethical decisions for the people without the people's feedback or input; this is evidenced in the diverse understanding of the power of bishops and pastors in our culture and in our Lutheran tradition. Could these and other issues of power/authority be attributed to a misunderstanding of power? Could it be a mixing

of law and gospel or the two kingdoms? Could it be a misuse of the office of the ordained ministry? Or, finally, could it be a misunderstanding of the power of the church itself? This misunderstanding would be clearly evidenced in a mono-cultural theological curriculum that prepares the church's leadership for the world.

The issue of power and authority is compounded when the mission efforts of a church, such as the Lutheran church, are blessed with many nations and cultures becoming members within its communion. It becomes an issue when the church misuses its power to control the diverse cultural experiences and understandings of Christian theology.

I have observed that normative Lutheran statements about the ministry of the church focus on the lordship of Christ and the means by which Christ's lordship becomes known: the Holy Spirit, the gospel in word and sacrament, Holy Scripture and its interpretation, the three ecumenical creeds (Apostolic, Nicene, Athanasian), and the Lutheran Confessions (the Book of Concord of 1580).[1]

I agree with this focus, along with the "Word of God" being the highest authority in the church, but I do not agree with the continual avoidance of the contemporary context out of which theological statements are derived. From the 16th century to the present, the theological pacesetters, culturally speaking, have done their work in the North Atlantic community. The leadership has been predominantly male. Moreover, they have produced their work in a "climate of the superiority" of western culture. Most of the theologians even shared a similar racial or ethnic background. The context in which they did their theological work was in a sense homogeneous. What I have observed is mainly a family dialogue between male western theologians. Even if one adds American contributions, we do not get beyond the homogeneity of the cultural context of theologians of the North Atlantic community. This is one of the strongest presuppositions needed for understanding our present theological curriculum.

It is for this reason that I count it a privilege to share my thoughts concerning the topic of "Power/Authority in the Global Church of the 21st Century."

The focus of this paper will be on the "new voices," with special reference to multicultural and female voices. With these new voices as a point of departure, we will examine our subject matter from the perspective of the African-American voice. This paper will attempt to contrast the dominant cultural perspective with that of the African-American position on the matter of power/authority in ecclesiology.

We have, indeed, moved into a new epoch of theological reflection. Many church systems have done their work and passed from the scene. There are many theological methods and yet more diverse programs. Many Christian denominations like Lutheranism are now communities of multicultural diversity. David Tracy's *Blessed Rage for Order* symbolizes the transitional and diverse state of theology as a result of this church growth.

Some look at our new multicultural context and declare that the age of male culture among theologians has passed. They lament the past and are fearful of the future. But, even though we are moving through an epoch of transition, we can still anticipate a positive challenge to any significant developments.

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[1] See the summary of texts from the *Book of Concord* by Warren A. Quanbeck, "The Teaching Ministry of the Church in Lutheran Perspective" *LIRC* 5, 133-39.

Before we discuss who exercises the power/authority in matters of dogma or doctrine, it is necessary to establish the sources from which such dogma is to be drawn, and the norm by which it must be judged.

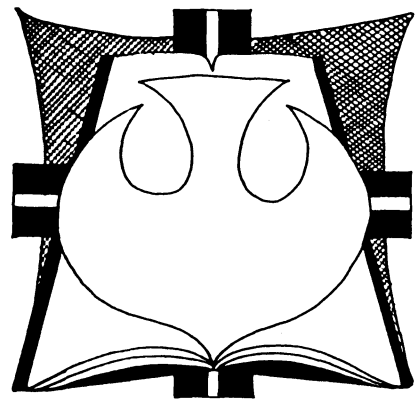
No one can tell us what God wants us to believe and to do but God. "The things of God knoweth no person, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 2:9-11). Therefore, our knowledge of God and God's will is derived from God's Word. "Should not a people seek unto their God? To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa 8:19-20). The Word of God is the norm by which the laity, bishops, pastors, and teachers are to be judged.

For Luther, the Word of God is the highest authority, being revealed as Law and Gospel in God's creation and redemption.[2] Since the gospel is the word which communicates salvation through Christ (*was christum treibet*), we can also posit that this also was the central issue in power/authority for him. Furthermore, as most Lutherans well know, for Luther the doctrine of justification by faith alone was the apostolic, authoritative *raison-d'etre* for Christian life.

Here it will be helpful to see that the function of power/authority in Lutheranism posits a hermeneutical process in order to maintain the gospel promise of salvation by grace through faith in Christ and to judge all other contrary teaching as false because, and in so far as, it contradicts the gospel.

The Lutheran Confessions therefore state: "We believe, teach and confess that sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with all teachers should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic scriptures of the Old and the New Testament alone" (Triglot, p. 777).

The Formula of Concord (1577) developed several norms for the evaluation of power/authority:



1. Scripture
2. Ecumenical Creeds
3. Augsburg Confession

Finally, the Lutheran tradition is historically filled with detailed accounts of the application of Law and Gospel in the distinction between the secular and church realms. Given a cursory overview of historical Lutheranism from the 16th century to the present, there appears to be no end to the writing and quarreling concerning the hermeneutical understanding of Christian dogma and its authority.

But what of Lutheran churches today in the U.S.A.? Some Lutherans in the U.S.A. have only recently begun to be concerned about the authority of dogma relative to bishops and pastors.[3] With the un-

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[2] This generally accepted view by Lutherans is presented quite well in the material of John Headley, *Luther's View of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

[3] See Theodore G. Tappert, "Lutheran Ecclesiastical Government in the United States of America," *Episcopacy in the Lutheran Church?* 155-74.

derstanding that the highest Lutheran ecclesiastic authority in the U.S.A. is usually located in a biennial assembly, and with the understanding that the bishop chairs the assembly as leader, it can be assumed that power/authority is tied to bishops.[4]

From a Lutheran point of view, the most recent reflection on the teaching authority is found in ecumenical dialogues where issues of contextuality, hermeneutics, and other traditions are being examined for the sake of building bridges between various churches. It is here that we are now ready to introduce the African-American church tradition as a contrasting voice in our understanding of these ecumenical dialogues.

Globally speaking, African and African-American theologians tend to take the Christian tradition with utmost seriousness, as I have experienced over the years. Ellewaha E. Mshana, who teaches at the Lutheran Theological College, Makumira, Tanzania, and who edits the *Africa Theological Journal*, observes the importance of the contextualization of theology:

> To hear the African theology we have to go and listen to the African preachers, laymen [sic], catechists, teachers and ordinary believers in Christ and hear what the Gospel means to them.... We have come to look for ways in which the Christian faith is being implanted in African art forms, music, drama, traditional dances, stories, proverbs, wise sayings, analogies, metaphors.... We have to go to our African traditional religion. We have to translate the Christian truth into African thought forms... language... terminologies.[5]

It seems to me, when the subject matter of power/authority relative to theology or ecclesiology is brought to bear from an African context or from some other multicultural context, what is needed is for theology to be decolonized. The apologetic needs of African Christians all over the world must be African ways of thinking. "Just as Greeks Hellenized Christianity and Europeans Europeanized Christianity, Africans must Africanize Christianity." (Mshana, p. 26)

The contemporary context of many Christian denominations, like Lutheranism, is in tension with a mono-cultural style of doing theology. The contemporary context is multicultural, post-Barthian, and liberation-oriented. No longer is theology uncritically accepted as reflected, packaged and shipped with power/authority by theologians of the North Atlantic theological community. The power/authority of western theology seems to be diminishing as third world and African-American theologians develop their own reflections and programs of the Christian faith. This does not rule out the possibility of partnership in a pluralistic context, but we must take seriously the many contexts in which theological reflection is being done both now and in the 21st century. At the same time, there is always the danger that our faith may be severely tested by our multicultural context, and even more, Christ might be uprooted in one context and set in concrete in another. In spite of this danger, in order to get at the power/authority question multiculturally, we must move toward a contextual methodology because theology must develop in context.

In the area of contextuality, Paul Tillich's method is instructive. Tillich brought the faith into contact with the human situation of the believer.[6] Context will help

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[4] Ibid., 173.

[5] Ellewaha E. Mshana, "The Challenge of Black Theology and African Theology," *Africa Theological Journal* 5 (1972): 22-28.

[6] Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

shape the questions as well as the theological response! Furthermore, John Cobb helps us to see that context may lead us to the truly universal Christian vision in his *Beyond Dialogue*.[7] Many other African-American theologians can be placed in this company, such as the universalists Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Any theological issue, including the question of power/authority, must take the multicultural context into consideration. The time has come for all who participate in theological reflection—whether in Europe or the Americas, in Asia or Africa—to be left alone with their Bibles, Christ, their own cultures and histories in doing their work. In fact, we probably need to declare a moratorium on western domination in the field of ecclesiology and theology.

According to James Cone, there are many factors that shape the perspective of African-American theological understanding of power/authority, such as the black experience, black history, black culture, revelation, Scripture, and tradition.[8] The criterion for dealing with these factors is to ask: How are these sources related to the oppression of African-Americans? This question implies an acknowledgment and understanding of contextuality as it applies to the African-American Christian tradition.

The tradition that has been normative for the black churches and the black community is not the western Christian tradition *per se*, although this tradition is an important source for black people. More accurately, the normative tradition for African-American people is that tradition governed by the principle of non-racism, incarnated in the black Christian tradition. This tradition is characterized by the biblical doctrine and the African American confessional statement about the "parenthood of God and the kinship of all peoples." This is the contemporary, non-sexist version of the original expression about "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men."

The contradiction between the biblical understanding of humanity and the oppressive practices of the dominant churches is obvious to black Christians.

The black Christian tradition stands in opposition to the western dominated Christian tradition in that the black Christian tradition holds as its basic source of authority that to which it has been unreservedly committed, namely, a biblical anthropology which affirms the equality of all persons under God regardless of race. This dogma has been the essence of the black Christian tradition. Equally, it has been the basic contradiction implicit in the religion of Americans with regard to the area of power/authority: The contradiction between the biblical understanding of humanity and the oppressive practices of the dominant churches is obvious to black Christians.

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[7] John B. Cobb, Jr., *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).

[8] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1986). See especially chapter 2.

This contradiction is the strongest stumbling block among the people of color to accepting a Lutheran implementation of its power/authority.

As we have mentioned, the locus for obtaining a more comprehensive view of power/authority is theological anthropology. From an African-American theological perspective, it is clear that the way in which one thinks of humanity always affects the way one thinks of God.

Failure to affirm the full humanity of other persons is the root cause of almost every social problem. The conflict between totalitarianism and Jesus is fundamentally centered in this: Is a human being a person or a pawn? Martin Luther King, Jr., observed that "the immorality of segregation is that it treats men [sic] as means rather than ends, and thereby reduces them to things rather than persons."[9] Within the black Christian tradition, Martin Luther King saw: "A life is sacred. Property is intended to serve life, and no matter how much we surround it with rights and respect, it has no personal being. It is part of the earth man walks on; it is not man."[10] Martin Luther King, Jr.'s understanding of anthropology not only came from his understanding of God in Christ, but it also made itself manifest in the civil rights struggle that not only benefited black persons, but white persons as well. This biblical anthropology is derived from a common source of authority, the black Christian confessional tradition.

Thus the moral and political character of the black church tradition is grounded in the power/authority of Jesus Christ. It is no understatement to say that the thought and action of black churches cannot be understood apart from this principle. This principle is to black churches what the Protestant principle is to Protestantism, namely, a prophetic principle of criticism concerning power/authority. This principle has been stated well by the founders of the black tradition, namely, the African Methodist Episcopal bishops.

> Bishop Payne crystallized the sentiment of all the distinguished statesmen and churchmen when he said, "God our Father; Christ our Redeemer; Man our Brother." This is the official motto of the A. M. E. Church and her mission in the commonwealth of Christianity is to bring all denominations and races to acknowledge and practice the sentiments contained therein. When these sentiments are universal in theory and practice, then the mission of the distinctive colored organizations will cease.[11]

Such a sentiment expresses the confessional view of power/authority for black churches, both then and now.

Theology from any cultural perspective should not devise a norm which ignores the encounter of that culture with the revelation of God. Whatever it says about salvation/liberation must be said in light of that culture's experience with Jesus Christ.

African-American people have heard enough about the power/authority of Jesus Christ and the confessions of the Lutheran Church. What they want to know is what God has to say about their condition. Or more, what is God doing about it? What is the relevance of power/authority in the struggle against the forces of evil which seek to destroy not just the African, but all people of color? These and many other

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[9] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Chaos or Community*, 114.

[10] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Trumpet of Conscience*, 56.

[11] See the Quadrennial Address of the Bishops, "Journal of the 20th Quadrennial Session of the General Conference of the A. M. E. Church," held in St. Stephen's A. M. E. Church, Wilmington, NC, May 4-22, 1896, p. 98.

questions are the key criteria which must shape the character and norm of our theology for the 21st century.

Despite the misuse of power/authority within the dominant Christian community, the black community is convinced of the reality of Jesus Christ's authority and power and his total identification with their suffering. Historically, black folk never believed that slavery was God's will. Every time a master/mistress came to his/her death, some black folk believed it was the work of God inflicting just judgment for the suffering of God's people.

In our modern age, we have a class situation, but it is not a crisis of power/authority. Rather, it is racism, classism, ageism, sexism, the feminization of poverty, and discrimination against women and homosexuals. We lift these up as grave concerns to be addressed. Moreover, unemployment and homelessness have reached epidemic proportions. Some theologians seem to think that this crisis will heal itself without careful analysis and intervention on the church's part. But wishing will not make it so; holding a theological conference to debate and establish other forms of power/authority will not help if it is an end in itself without praxis.

I have in this essay attempted to outline my vision of a contextual method by offering theological reflection on power/authority in the church of the 21st century. Church assemblies must allow people of color equal voice and vote with others.

The goal is to get to know others in their context and in the depths of their commitment to Christ in order that mutual understanding may take place. It requires a greater grounding in faith to risk this encounter than it does to surround oneself with dogmatic structures of power/authority. I believe that the way to spiritual growth in the power/authority of Jesus Christ begins with removing the walls of separation. As philosophic logic would dictate, it is not possible to build walls to keep others out without those same walls hemming oneself in.

> Theology from any cultural perspective should not devise a norm which ignores the encounter of that culture with the revelation of God.

There is no easy or final answer to the question of power/authority, but each Christian has to live with it and no serious Christian can sidestep it. I have my own provisional perspectives, gleaned from the black Christian tradition. My faith is grounded in the God who raised Jesus from the dead. Since the human situation has been filled with the sins of racism, sexism, and greed, I place heavy emphasis upon God's continual grace upon God's human instruments in order to triumph over evil in the world. As faith in God confronts collective evils and mass human suffering, we Christians go with the power/authority of God as fellow sufferers and servants of God to maintain the victory of life over death. We maintain that we live more abundantly in Christ our Lord, for it is the nature of our God to be a God of abundance rather than a God of scarcity.

Which Way Should We Go? The Ethical Dilemma of African American Lutheranism

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1997 could be a watershed year for African American Lutheranism and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Both will be at a crossroads. The assessment of the ten-year goal to make this church more racially and culturally diverse will create passion on all sides of the debate. Some will argue that the gospel should motivate the church's desire to be racially and ethnically diverse. We don't need the law to include the viewpoints and aspirations of African American people. On the other hand, some will argue that we need the law because the church is a socially sinful structure, it excludes and marginalizes African American Lutherans. Some people will argue a middle position; namely, we need both the law and the gospel to assure the inclusion of African American religious, theological, and ethical perspectives. In light of these circumstances, it may be fruitful to ask the question: Which way should African American Lutheranism go?

I want to investigate the nature of the ethical dilemma facing African American Lutheranism. Following that, I want to suggest an appropriate response to the question of which way African American Lutheranism should go. Finally, since this essay is in honor of William E. Lesher, retiring president of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, I want to say something about the implications of this ethical dilemma for theological education.

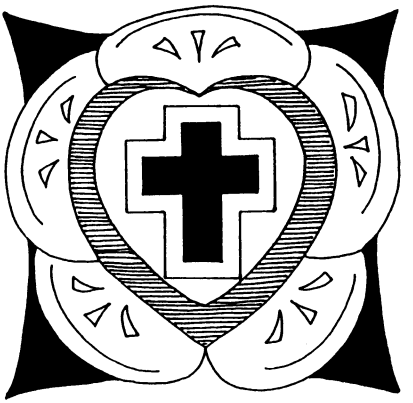
The nature of the ethical dilemma in the African American experience

The year was 1895. The event was the opening of the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia. The speaker was Booker T. Washington. This speech etched Washington's name into the history of the United States. Washington argued that African Americans should do

three things: (1) cast their buckets where they were; (2) forsake the pursuit of their socio-political rights; and (3) pursue an industrial education. Moreover, he made the case for the socio-political separateness of African Americans and whites in the United States. Washington's speech, known as the "Great Atlanta Compromise," created the atmosphere for the 1896 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision; namely, the institutionalization of the "separate but equal" doctrine.

Washington's speech drew support and opposition among African Americans in the United States. The most public and eloquent oppositional voice was the voice of W. E. B. Du Bois. In "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others,"[1] Du Bois argued that Washington's program of submission and vocational education amounted to African American people selling their birthright. Moreover, Du Bois chastised some of the African American leaders for remaining silent in their opposition to Washington's "Atlanta Compromise." Du Bois counseled that these leaders had a responsibility to the African American community and that responsibility entailed encouraging and leading African American people in their struggle for full citizenship rights in the United States. Du Bois wrote, "It is wrong to aid and abet a national crime simply because it is unpopular not to do so."[2] Silence was not a viable response for Du Bois! African American leaders were called upon "to oppose" Washington's program of compromise and disenfranchisement "by all civilized methods."[3] The Washington-Du Bois debate crystallized the ethical dilemma confronting African Americans in their daily living: assimilation or separation?

In the essay, "The Conservation of Races,"[4] Du Bois describes the ethical dilemma as an experience of "twoness." He writes, "Am I an American or am I a Negro?



Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American? If I strive as a Negro, am I not perpetuating the very cleft that threatens and separates black and white America?"[5] What grounds Du Bois's thinking is not only his reading of the African American situation—namely, legalized racial segregation in the United States—but also a doctrine of cultural pluralism.

Du Bois makes three points in the above mentioned essay. First, Du Bois argues that the history of the world is the history of races and groups. While individuality is

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[1] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks*. With Introduction by Dr. Nathan Hare and Alvin F. Pouissaint, M.D. Revised and Updated Bibliography (New York: NAL Penguin Inc., 1969, Introduction, 1982), 79-95.

[2] Ibid., 91.

[3] Ibid., 92.

[4] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in *W.E.B. Du Bois Speaks: Speeches and Addresses, 1890-1919*, ed. by Dr. Philip S. Foner, with a tribute by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), 73-85.

[5] Ibid., 79-80.

Does assimilating within the ELCA mean that African American Lutherans are acquiescing to racism and racial discrimination?

important because of the need and desire to pursue development, the greater emphasis is on belonging to a particular racial group. It is the group which is able to secure rights for the individual. A race, then, is a group of people who have a common history, language, tradition, and people who work together to accomplish a common ideal.[6] Thus, there are diverse racial groups, and they are the bearers of history. History becomes scientific documentation of the gifts and contributions made by the diversity of racial groups.

Second, Du Bois contends that all racial groups have gifts and ideals which they are pursuing, and these can be researched and documented through history. Therefore, it stands to reason that African Americans also have gifts and ideals to share with the world. Du Bois writes that "other race groups are striving, each in its own way, to develop for civilization its particular message, its particular ideal, which shall help to guide the world nearer and nearer that perfection of human life for which we all long, that 'one far off Divine event.'" African Americans, then, "have not as yet given to civilization the full spiritual message which they are capable of giving."[7] According to Du Bois, African Americans had a moral obligation to cultivate and share their gifts with the world. It is the destiny of African American people not to be absorbed by Euro-Americans. Rather, says Du Bois, the destiny of African American people is "a stalwart originality which shall unswervingly follow Negro ideals."[8]

Third, Du Bois argues for the development of what he called "race organizations." Race organizations have a dual role. On the one hand, they assist in the internal organization of the race. Such things as unity, common ideals, and pride in the gifts of the race are critical benefits of race organizations. On the other hand, race organizations serve as a "negative defense." They serve as a refuge from imposed racism experienced by African American people. Thus, Du Bois called for the development of a host of organizations including colleges, newspapers, business organizations, a school of literature and art, "and an intellectual clearing house... we may call a Negro Academy."[9] The ethical paradox is whether African Americans are willing to pay the price of assimilating with the dominant culture or separating from the dominant culture.

The ethical dilemma of African American Lutheranism

African American Lutherans, like all African Americans, seek to understand their relationship to God and the world around them. They are raising theological and ethical questions which challenge them and the church. Does Du Bois's social analysis

[6] Ibid., 75-76.
[7] Ibid., 78.
[8] Ibid., 79.
[9] Ibid., 81.

accurately describe the ethical dilemma facing African American Lutheranism within the ELCA? Are we African Americans or Lutherans? Is there a possibility of being both African American and Lutheran? Does assimilating within the ELCA mean that African American Lutherans are acquiescing to racism and racial discrimination? Should African American Lutherans assimilate, thereby giving up their religious, theological, ethical, and cultural gifts? Could the separation of African American Lutherans from Euro-American Lutheranism assist in the development of a specific vision and concrete goals which enhance the development of African American Lutheranism? Is it possible for African American Lutheranism to separate itself *and* protest against racial discrimination and racism within the ELCA?

A careful study of the history of African American Lutheranism in the United States reveals a similar situation. For instance, some would argue that the establishment of the "Alpha Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Freedmen in America" reflects how deep the ethical dilemma existed within African American Lutheranism in its formative stages. Clearly, there was a desire to remain within the Lutheran tradition.[10] Others would contend that since financial support for ministry among African American people by Euro-American Lutherans was practically nonexistent, African American Lutherans took their destiny into their own hands.[11] In light of what this historical fact tells us, should African American Lutherans assimilate with Euro-American Lutherans or form a separate organization?

I contend that the situation of African American Lutherans, especially in the ELCA, is not much different than the situation of African Americans during Du Bois's era. Granted, legalized racial segregation has been removed. Yet, most African American Lutherans are generally segregated into all African American congregations or predominantly Euro-American congregations. Despite the ten-year goals on racial and ethnic diversity, which were designed to open the structures of the church to new methods of conceiving and being the church, African American Lutherans' theological, ethical, and practical dimensions are often ignored or perceived as being unwanted. While this socially sinful structure seeks to open itself, the *ethos* has yet to be changed.

Responses to the ethical dilemma

Du Bois, I believe, provides some guidance for African American Lutheranism and its decision about which way to go in the next century. In his article on Booker T. Washington, Du Bois identifies three responses by African Americans to their situation in the United States. These responses are "revolt," "hypocrisy," and "radicalism."[12] However, in another essay, "Of the Faith of

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[10] *Minutes*, North Carolina Synod (1889), 57. This synod was formed in 1889 in North Carolina and included four African American pastors and about 200 African American Lutherans in five congregations. It should be pointed out that the resolution states that the African American ministers *requested* permission to form their own synod. This writer has failed to locate primary source material (material written by African American Lutherans) to corroborate the making of this request.

[11] Dr. Jeff Johnson contends that this action was for survival purposes. He makes this point in *Black Christians: The Untold Lutheran Story*. Forward by Martin E. Marty (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 145.

[12] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 84.

Any decision on which way African American Lutheranism should go must be based on an adequate social analysis.

the Fathers,"[13] Du Bois focused on two streams of ethical thought, hypocrisy and radicalism. Hypocrisy meant compromise. African Americans who functioned with this type of response to the ethical dilemma made "an attempt to adjust all thought and action to the will of the greater group."[14] On the other hand, radicalism expresses "a determined effort at self-realization and self-development despite environing opinion."[15] These two schools of thought have prevailed in various forms throughout the contemporary history of African Americans in the United States. Today, these schools of thought would be identified as integration and liberation, most notably through the witness of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X.

Du Bois favored radicalism as his response to the ethical dilemma. Following the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, he began the arduous task of organizing the Niagara Movement (an organization which preceded the NAACP). This Movement represented a militant response to the compromising position of Booker T. Washington. When Du Bois was asked to join the staff of the NAACP he organized, wrote, and edited the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine. Du Bois' ethical position, grounded in his reading of the African American experience and in the doctrine of cultural pluralism, persuaded him to argue for self-segregation by African Americans *and* protest against imposed segregation.

Which way should African American Lutheranism go? The history of African American Lutheranism tells us that there is an ethical paradox. On the one hand, African Americans, especially in the United States, have been reluctant to join the Lutheran church in any great number. Could it be that the Reformation heritage, with its theological and ethical focus aptly described as a paradox, fails to take seriously the existential situation of African Americans? Or, could it be that African American Lutheranism has become so co-opted by Euro-American Lutheranism that it is difficult to make an adequate *ethical* witness among African American people at all? On the other hand, one could say that the organizational life of the church has progressed. The growth of the number of African American employees, pastors, and theologians testifies to the change which is occurring within Lutheranism. This stirs a sense of hope which is critical for those who confess within the Lutheran tradition that Jesus Christ is Lord.

I contend that any decision on which way African American Lutheranism should go must be based on an adequate social analysis. If African American Lutheranism is basically middle-class, educationally and economically, what are the implications for building strong self-sufficient congregations? What does that mean when it comes to developing African American Lutheran leaders for the next century?

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[13] Ibid., 210-25.
[14] Ibid., 84.
[15] Ibid.

When close scrutiny is given to the difference between Washington and Du Bois, that difference lies primarily in where they locate the social problem in society. For Washington, the social problem is located with African American people. African American people lacked the necessary educational and economic skills; therefore, vocational education would make them economically equal with Euro-Americans. The ethic which follows from this is political realism accomplished through the strategy of compromise. Du Bois, on the other hand, understood the social problem being located in the practice of racial segregation. He shifted the problem from African American people to Euro-Americans and their practice of racism. The ethic which follows from this understanding is political idealism. The principal strategy is propaganda (in its positive sense) and protest.

The difference between Washington and Du Bois is critical for African American Lutherans to confront. Our history as Lutherans is paradoxical in nature. It may be that the response of African American Lutherans should be assimilation *and* separation. There is a need for African American Lutherans to affirm the gifts God has blessed them to share with the whole church and with the world. We are African Americans with roots sunk in the soil of Mother Africa. Assimilation may be what African American Lutherans are called to do at this particular time in the history of Lutheranism in the United States.

At the same time, there is a need for separation. African American Lutherans need to organize. What better purpose is there than developing a common vision, clear goals, and a theologically informed understanding of what it means to be truly African American and authentically Lutheran? Who is God for us? What does it mean to believe in a Jesus who walks with African American Lutherans and gives the strength to "keep on keeping on?" Is there an African American Lutheran understanding of church? What is an African American Lutheran understanding of ethics? What are the normative principles which guide the ethical formation of African American Lutherans? African American Lutheranism, through its paradoxical response of assimilation and separation, brings to the Lutheran table critique and affirmation. The ethical paradox of African American Lutheranism will not be solved soon. However, recognizing that there is a dilemma and subsequently an ethical paradox is a beginning for making a decision on which way to go.

Implications for theological education

What does this have to do with theological education? While I do not propose to have all the answers, nonetheless I do wish to offer some broad reflections which could embrace the cultural pluralism of Du Bois and the ethical paradox of African American Lutheranism.

First, it is vitally important to recognize that there is a history of African American Lutheranism in the United States, the Caribbean, and around the world. That history ought to be required study for all who wish to serve as rostered leaders in the church. What is being called for is balance in presenting the Truth through the truth of a particular racial group. The African American Lutheran perspective could challenge the ethical assumptions students bring with them to seminary.

Second, African American Lutheranism could prosper through the support of a theological think tank. The Conference of Black Lutherans (CIBL) serves as an excellent example of what can potentially hap-

pen within African American Lutheranism. In the best sense of Du Boisian radicalism, CIBL is concerned about the theological development of African American Lutheranism and protesting when wrong is being perpetrated against African American people. The vibrancy and ethical witness of African American Lutheranism depends on its use of professionally trained African American Lutheran theologians.

Third, the presuppositions of all theological and ethical thought need to be unveiled for their racial, gender, and class biases. A multicultural or pluralistic understanding of God's Truth can provide new insights into the diversity of Christian voices often excluded and marginalized. This does not necessarily lead to ethical relativism. Rather, such a posture can lead the church to the normative center of ethical thought.

Fourth, if it is the case that African American Lutherans believe that responsible ethical behavior (the pursuit of justice) is in the name of the gospel, it is necessary for theological education to join with African American Lutheran clergy and lay people in their struggle to live in the midst of the ethical paradox. Theological education must be in solidarity with those who are actually struggling, with those who are seeking to transform society through assimilation and separation.

Finally, African American Lutherans know that they are not struggling alone. The God of Abraham and Sarah, Esther and Hagar, Jesus and Mary struggles with them. And it is that same God who struggles with those in theological education. God's presence strengthens African American Lutherans to be faithful to God in Jesus Christ for the purpose of building up the saints.

In conclusion, I have sought to describe the ethical dilemma facing African American Lutheranism. It is a dilemma that reflects the African American experience generally and the experience within Lutheranism. African American Lutheranism has responded through an ethical paradox: assimilation and separation. For African American Lutheranism to remain viable, it must be faithful to its history in the United States, the Caribbean, and around the world. Which way should African American Lutheranism go in the next century? It alone can make that decision; however, it appears at this moment to be assimilation *and* separation.

Reading the New Testament in the Environmental Age

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It is a pleasure to contribute an essay in honor of Bill Lesher. Among Bill's many gifts is a vision for global ministry that encompasses a concern for the common good, a proactive stance toward justice, and a commitment to the integrity of creation. It is this last item that I want to lift up here, for, as President of LSTC, Bill Lesher has led the way in helping the seminary become a place that fosters care for the earth and that prepares pastors who can offer leadership in matters of ecology and justice. For this, along with many other dimensions of his legacy, I am deeply grateful.

Since we are now entering an Environmental Age, we are beginning to discover what it means to read the Bible for what it says about creation and the role of human beings as part of that creation.[1] Much has been done in Old Testament studies to begin the process of interpretation, but only a limited number of articles have appeared in New Testament studies. This essay, also, is a modest effort to suggest some directions for consideration.

We will not find in the New Testament our modern concerns over the human degradation of creation—the deterioration of the ozone layer, threats to life from global warming, the effects of massive garbage and toxic waste disposal, the problems of deforestation and desertification, or the loss of biological diversity. Nevertheless, there is much in the New Testament that has implications for the environmental crisis and that undergirds a commitment to care for God's creation.

As we seek to discover what the New Testament has to offer, we will surely highlight passages that emphasize creation and new creation as the work of God and of Christ. We will also probably want to make apparent the cosmological dimensions of the various New Testament writings—the image of creation and the human place in it. As Christians, we will likely find ourselves interpreting familiar passages in new ways and finding relevance in passages not so familiar. We will also turn to the Bible to

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[1] I am grateful to my colleagues in New Testament, Edgar Krentz and Barbara Rossing, reading and critiquing an earlier draft of this essay.

challenge us and to transform us so that we are better prepared for the conflicts, the choices, and the sacrifices that may come to us in this Environmental Age.

Problems and possibilities for the New Testament in relation to the environment

While there are clearly problems with trying to read the New Testament as an "environmental" document, there are also many promising possibilities. On the one hand, the New Testament does not have extended descriptions of creation and of nature like the Old Testament has. On the other hand, there is more in the New Testament about creation and nature than first meets the eye.

Unlike the Old Testament, there are no stories about God's creation of the world, stories that explicitly articulate conceptions of creation and the place of humans in creation. This situation makes it difficult to discern the point of view of the New Testament writers on these matters. However, the New Testament writings usually assume fundamental points of continuity with Old Testament views about creation. Also, several New Testament writers assign a role for Christ in creation as well as a role in redeeming the (whole) creation. In addition, the New Testament tells many re-creation stories—stories about the restoration of creation and stories of people who recover their proper place in creation. These stories affirm that the redemption of Christ does not abandon creation but rather fulfills creation.

Also, unlike the Old Testament, there are no extended passages in the New Testament that describe the larger natural world, such as we find in some psalms or in certain passages in the prophets or in the book of Job. Nevertheless, there is much more about the natural world in the New Testament than interpreters have usually acknowledged. Views of nature are embedded in or implied by the New Testament writings in a line here or a brief passage there—in a metaphor or a parable or a wisdom saying or a creedal formula. When we treat these brief passages as windows through which to discern the affirmations and assumptions about nature behind these passages, then the whole writing in which they are embedded looks different. In this process, the purpose is not to identify proof-texts but rather to see each whole writing in a new way. Then we can integrate the particular view of creation into our overall understanding of that particular writing.

Also, the New Testament is more anthropocentric than the Old Testament. Recent scholarship has made it clear that salvation history in the Old Testament encompasses both human history and natural history as one unified story. By contrast, salvation in the New Testament is predominantly anthropocentric, that is, centered on human beings.[2] For example, in the New Testament there is no covenant that includes animals, no promises connected with the land, and the metaphors for salvation are overwhelmingly anthropocentric—as if redemption existed for humans alone and not for all of creation.

Nevertheless, here again, there is much more for us to recover in the New Testament than seems apparent at first sight. In

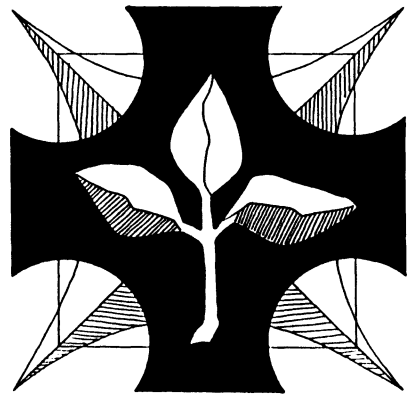
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[2] One of the most egregious examples of anthropocentrism is 1 Cor 9:9-10, where Paul cannot imagine that God would be concerned about oxen. "For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.' Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Or does he not speak entirely for our sake? It is indeed written for our sake, for whoever plows should plow in hope and whoever threshes should thresh in hope of a share in the crop."

the New Testament, as with the Old Testament, human salvation and judgment are never divorced from the rest of the natural world—a star appears at Jesus' birth, the arrival of the kingdom involves the calming of storms at sea, the oppression of humans will be accompanied by signs in the sun and stars, in the end time the trees will produce fruit all year round, Jesus will return on the clouds, and so on. In the New Testament, as in the Old Testament, there is no separation between human history and the natural world. They are not even two different things kept together. Rather, there is simply one world.

Finally, there are several dualistic aspects of thought in the New Testament not generally found in the Old Testament. Such dualistic aspects of thought tend to discourage a concern for the natural world. They include a dualistic contrast between God's Spirit and the life of the flesh, an apparent concern with individual, personal salvation after death in a heaven separate from the earth, and an early Christian expectation that Jesus would return soon to usher in the end of the world. In the view of many first century Christians, the form of this world was passing away as the new age was arriving. Such other-worldly ideas tended to treat this world not as an abiding home but simply as a place of pilgrimage on the way to heaven.

However, even the seemingly dualistic aspects of New Testament thought are not as negative toward creation as they may seem. In the New Testament, Spirit fulfills the material; it does not do away with it. It is an "orientation to the flesh" that the New Testament condemns, not flesh or body as such. After all, as John testifies, the word became flesh. Also, in the New Testament, there is no salvation apart from community, and there is no community apart from the whole (re-)creation. North America Christians have tended to read the New Testament with the individualistic eyes of our culture and failed to see the assumptions of the early Christians that all life is communal life. Finally, the coming apocalyptic age focuses not on heaven, but on a transformed earth, for the expectation was that Jesus was coming back—a view that supports the vision of the new creation as an affirmation of the world rather than as a rejection or an abandonment of it.



Interpreting New Testament writings with "green lenses."

Many approaches could be taken toward reading the New Testament out of an environmental concern. One approach might be to look for relevant themes and patterns of thought commonly shared across the New Testament writings: God as creator, incarnational theology, the stewardship role of humans, the images of new creation, and so on. This approach emphasizes the unity of the New Testament witness about creation.

On the other hand, when we read the New Testament through green lenses, we may also see many different understandings of creation. Rather than look for one

coherent image of creation in the New Testament, we might see in the different writings of the New Testament correspondingly differing views of nature and the human role within nature. Once we have seen these differing views, we can begin to interpret individual writings inclusive of their views of the whole cosmos. Here are three examples.

The Gospel of Mark:

> And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him. (Mark 1:12-13)

The words "and he was with the wild beasts" are a window into the overall view of nature in Mark's Gospel. Wild beasts represent the nonhuman creation, understood in Mark's experience to be at odds with humanity and a threat to human existence. In Mark's depiction of the world, this threat of nature is only one example of the oppression in a created order gone awry, in which human beings are under many oppressive forces—storms on the lake, the lack of food in a desert, illness, demons, and other human beings.

From the patterns evident in Mark's portrayal of the world, we might legitimately infer an assumption lying behind Mark's depictions: human beings were meant to exercise authority over the created order, not be oppressed by it. For Mark, the arrival of the "kingdom" of God restores people to their proper place in creation—making available to humans authority under God over nonhuman forces that oppress people (but with no authority over other humans), for "all things are possible to those who have faith." With access to power from God, agents of the kingdom are expected to have authority over demons, illness, the wind, sea, and desert, but not over other people. Hence, the Gospel of Mark portrays the arrival of the kingdom of God as a restoration not only of human creation but of all creation.

According to Richard Bauckham, the temptation scene in the desert depicts the ideal.[3] Jesus is with the wild beasts and they are no threat to him. In Mark's view, Jesus has come to restore creation to its proper order—an order in which human beings are under God and in harmony with the rest of the created order—exercising an authority (dominion) in which animals are not a threat to humans and in which humans care for animals. Hosea predicted a time when God would make a covenant with the animals; God would abolish war from the earth and the animals could lie down in safety. The animals lie down with Jesus because they are safe from harm in his presence. In turn, Jesus also is safe from harm.

When we look at the whole of Mark, a consistent picture emerges: nature is potentially threatening; the arrival of the kingdom of God restores human beings to their proper place and role in creation; by faith, followers participate in the restoration of creation—either coming into harmony with nature or by having authority to overcome its threat.

The Letter to the Romans:

> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of

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[3] See Richard Bauckham, "Jesus and the Wild Animals (Mark1:13): A Christological Image for an Ecological Age," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Christ and Lord,* ed. Joel Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

> God. We know the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Rom 8:19-23)

In commenting on this passage, Robert Jewett notes that the creation is here personified as it awaits with eager expectation and groans inwardly in labor pains.[4] This, Jewett notes, goes in the direction of the modern ecological movement that sees the fate of the creation as intimately tied to the fate of the children of God. Creation fell when the first people in the garden sinned and overstepped their limits in arrogance. Through Christ and the Spirit, God is re-creating people capable of righteousness who will treat one another and all of creation with justice and care. When the new creation of righteous human beings is revealed and given dominion, then all nonhuman creation will also be set free from its bondage to decay and experience the freedom of the glory of the children of God. This will begin to "restore a rightful balance to creation once again, overcoming the corruption and disorder that resulted from the curse on Adam" (p. 17). In other words, all creation is eager, because when human beings become righteous, they will treat the rest of creation in such a way that all creation will thrive.

Thus, there is a clear connection between the righteousness of human beings and the state of creation. The issue is whether humans will express true dominion or idolatrous dominion. The basic idea, Jewett writes, is that "by acting out idolatrous desires to have unlimited dominion over the garden, the original purpose of creation—to express goodness and to reflect divine glory—was emptied" (p. 19). The phrase "the glory of the children of God" is thus understood in terms of humans regaining

When human beings become righteous, they will treat the rest of creation in such a way that all creation will thrive.

their proper dominion over creation and participating in the righteousness and justice of God whose scope is cosmic (p. 24).

The Letter to the Colossians:

> He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created.... He himself is before all things and in him all things hold together.... For in him all the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (Col 1:15-20)

In analyzing this post-Pauline letter, Joseph Sittler was acutely aware of the anthropocentric nature of most metaphors of redemption.[5] Now that we are aware how much *all* of nature needs to be redeemed, he argued, we need a Christology that is as large as the size of the problems we face, a Christology that addresses not just human fallenness but the fallenness of all creation.

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[4] Robert Jewett, "Romans 8:18-30" (Unpublished draft of the Hermeneia Commentary on Romans, by permission), 15.

[5] See Joseph Sittler, "Called to Unity," *Ecumenical Review* 14 (1962) 177-87; reprinted in *Currents* 16:1 (February 1989) 5-13.

Sittler pointed to this passage from Colossians as an adequate Christology. Here is an understanding of the cross of Jesus that extends to the whole created order. Jesus did not die for humans alone to be reconciled to God. Instead, Jesus' death is a reconciliation of all things in the whole of creation. The consequence is that humans too are reconciled with "all things" and therefore placed in a new and responsible relationship with the whole created order. The work of Christ as a cosmic redeemer catches the hearer up in a drama of redemption that includes the whole cosmos and is therefore able to address our environmental crisis.

Other Writings. We could illustrate the distinctive views of other New Testament writings: Matthew has a wisdom theology that views nature as a teacher for human morality and values; John's Gospel portrays the care and protection of an owner (of sheep by a shepherd), rather than the care provided by a hireling, as an alternative to stewardship in modeling our care for the gifts of God's creation;[6] and the Revelation of John argues that all of creation is falling apart under the judgment of God because of human injustice and that only the renunciation of idolatrous allegiance to the wealth and power of the Roman Empire will restore creation. In each case, the task is to create a holistic interpretation of each writing so as to include the place of the entire created order in our understanding of that writing.

Human sin and exploitation of nature

The New Testament addresses the kinds of human sinfulness that existed in the first century and that, in our time, still exist and contribute to our present ecological predicament. Do we exploit the earth because of greed and self-centeredness? because we need to prove our self-worth? because we are alienated from the creator and from the rest of creation? because we are afraid to relinquish our present security with choices made for the good of future generations? because we give ourselves over in idolatry to institutions or realities that are not God? The New Testament engages in such analyses of what is wrong with human beings in order to liberate people for a transformed existence together.

For example, Paul addresses the exploitation that occurs when we humans seek to justify ourselves. His announcement that we are already justified by grace liberates us to love others (and creation) for their own sake without the need to use them in our project to prove something about ourselves. Mark's story of Jesus addresses our fearful need to secure ourselves at the expense of others. He proclaims a gospel that gives courage to risk loss and to sacrifice in order to serve others (and creation). Matthew condemns our blind hypocrisy that prevents us from acknowledging the destructive aspects of our behavior. He proclaims a gospel of presence and forgiveness, which grants us the capacity to look honestly at ourselves and to repent. John's Gospel lifts up our alienation from the creator as the root of the human condition. He proclaims a gospel in which the whole created order (bread, water, light, vines and branches, doors) is sanctified by its capacity to bear witness to the one through whom all things were created.

As we come to a clearer understanding

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[6] "God's Family and Flocks: Remarks on Ownership in the Fourth Gospel," in *Covenant for a New Creation: Ethics, Religion, and Public Policy*, ed. Carol Robb and Carl Casebolt (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 91-106.

of the ways we contribute to the ecological crisis and discover our resistances to change, the various understandings of the gospel in the New Testament will empower us to address our human sinfulness. If we seek to overcome our environmental problems out of guilt or fear or anxiety about ourselves, we will probably only make matters worse. Rather, transformation needs to come from the good news of God's redemption and liberation. We need to be fed by the grace and compassion and joy of God for the choices and changes that may be required of us in the future as we face the environmental crises.

The New Testament as a manual for facing a possible end to the world

Most early Christians believed that the end of the world as they knew it was imminent and that soon Jesus would return for final judgment and salvation. We too are facing a possible end of the world as we humans know it because of drastic changes that may take place in the earth's environment. Parallels between the New Testament and our own time become obvious in an age when radical action may be called for as means to avoid our destruction.

In the face of a vision of a new world before them, the early Christians did not abandon the present age. On the contrary, they prepared for the salvation of the new age as a means to avoid its judgment. We are in a similar position. On the one hand, if we are not able to repent and change our destruction of the very ecosystems that sustain human life, the consequences may well represent God's judgment upon us. On the other hand, if we are able to repent and create a sustainable life together for future generations on the earth, the results will constitute a transformation that might in some sense represent God's salvation for the human race.

So, how did the early Christians act in the face of their expectation of the possible end of the world? What can we learn from them? Here are several characteristics shaped by their expectation of the end of the world.

1. There was a tremendous urgency to spread the message: from village to village, from city to city—to call people and cities and nations to repentance and change of behavior.

2. The early Christians made penetrating analyses of the human condition, not just in terms of obvious evil, but in terms of the dark side of our goodness and our compromises. They saw that the problem is not a simple matter of obvious good and evil, but of how we do evil in the course of doing good. They discerned their own hypocrisy and faced it. Instead of blaming others, they saw the evil in themselves and sought to change it. They identified the destructive myths of their culture, named those myths, and either transformed them or replaced them with life-giving stories.

3. Many early Christians withdrew and dissociated from the behavior and lifestyles and beliefs of the culture. They made a break with cultural values and institutions that were destructive—narrow family loyalties, class, wealth, positions of honor, certain interpretations of the law, ceremonies, economic participation, among others. Instead, they identified with the values and behavior appropriate to the emerging new world of the kingdom.

4. The early Christians confronted the destructive powers, fearlessly challenging their idolatry and hypocrisy. Thus, they were willing to sacrifice and to risk loss, persecution, and death in order to break with narrow allegiances of survival. They condemned the rulers, embraced a larger

allegiance to God's whole world, and sacrificed for the coming new world.

5. They created alternative communities. They did not just make a negative break from the culture, they also created a positive participation in the kingdom. They had a vision of the future and sought to live it now in the present. In so far as they lived that vision in the present, the kingdom had come! In this way, the early Christians sought to be a light for the world.

6. They did prophetic acts. In a sense, their lives were prophetic symbols, for every act is a prophetic act when done out of a vision of the future. So healing the sick, feeding the hungry, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners, were all prophetic symbols of a new age impinging on the present.

7. They were willing to act unilaterally, to create a new world without waiting for the leaders of the nation or the rest of the populace to lead the way or even to agree with them.

Thus, we can study the behavior of the early Christians facing what they believed to be the end of the world as a means to discover the kinds of behavior that might be appropriate for us as we face ultimate choices for creating a sustaining life on earth.

Conclusion

To learn from the Bible and to be transformed by what we read is not a matter of some wooden imitation. We live in a world quite different from the biblical world. Our problems take a similar but also a very dissimilar shape. We are called to discern how the gospel addresses us in the circumstances in which we live. The New Testament is a resource book for such a calling, a collection of powerful testimonies to the work of God that authorizes us to be creative and that empowers us to address our problems in the Environmental Age with courage and with hope.

For further reading

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"Are you able to drink the cup?"[1] Grape Juice at Holy Communion

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I have been impressed with President Bill Lesher's leadership in navigating worship debates at LSTC. Bill's tenure at LSTC has seen a flourishing of diversity in worship styles within the broad range of Lutheran traditions. As a new faculty member, I have appreciated Bill's insistence upon excellence in worship, his commitments to globalization and inclusiveness, and his participatory and empowering style.

Holy Communion practices are a subject of debate at this seminary and among Lutherans in general, especially as the ELCA prepares to adopt a sacramental practices statement this summer. In this essay I want to address the proposed statement's preference for communion under one element (bread only) for those who cannot drink wine, rather than offering grape juice or non-alcoholic wine.[2] I will argue that it is more important to encourage all worshipers to both "eat" and "drink"—even if this means offering grape juice—than it is to mandate wine as the only drink at Holy Communion.

My approach will be primarily biblical, raising several New Testament considerations that have not received sufficient attention in recent discussions of Holy Communion. The final section of the article will address pastoral considerations, drawing on comments from pastors and other participants in an on-line "LutherLink" discussion group on sacramental practices, as well as my own pastoral experience.

The New Testament focus

New Testament eucharistic imagery focuses on "cup" rather than the contents of the cup. Biblical accounts of the Lord's Supper do not mention wine. This fact is important in light of the ELCA document's reference to the words of institution as the basis for mandating wine:

> In accordance with the words of institution, this church uses bread and wine in

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[1] Mark 10:38.

[2] Sections 44c,d, "The Use of the Means of Grace: A Proposed Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament," ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries, November 1996.

> the celebration of the Lord's Supper. (Section 44)

A recent position paper signed by 26 Lutheran worship professors and experts also cites scriptural precedent for making wine normative:

> In the Lord's Supper the church uses bread and wine in faithfulness to the biblical example.[3]

Appeals to the New Testament in mandating wine are inaccurate. In biblical accounts of the words of institution, the words "bread and *cup*" are used, not "bread and wine." The apostle Paul and three Synoptic Gospels' accounts of Jesus' last supper are consistent in the parallelism of "cup" (*poterion*) with bread, never "wine."[4] In John 6:53-56, the images are "blood" and "drinking;" wine is not mentioned. It is striking that nowhere in the New Testament is Jesus' "blood" or the contents of the "cup" identified as wine.[5]

The rationale for mandating wine at Holy Communion may be the "sign-value" of the elements, as the liturgical professors argue in their commentary:

> While the church has never felt compelled to use the exact type of bread and wine Jesus might have used, it finds great sign-value in the sharing of a single loaf of bread and a common cup of grape wine.[6]

However, it would be better to put the weight of the sign-value where the New Testament does: not on wine, but on the image of "cup."

The rationale for wine may be to remain faithful to the historical event of the Last Supper by drinking wine as Jesus did. However, scholars must admit that we have no certainty as to what constituted "wine" in the ancient world. In all likelihood, the alcohol content people consumed was considerably less than today, and perhaps even closer to that of our grape juice, since the ancient custom was to serve wine mixed with water. Arguments that denigrate grape juice as a recent invention or even an "aberration,"[7] while also claiming continuity with the ancient church for wine, can be challenged on historical grounds.

Just as the wine's color is not deemed essential,[8] I would hope that we will not make alcohol content essential. Centuries

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[3] Thesis 30, "The Graceful Use of the Means of Grace: Theses on Worship and Worship Practice," by Lutheran members of the North American Academy of Liturgy, *Lutheran Forum* 29 (August 1995) 23.

[4] For example, Luke 22:17, "And likewise (Jesus took) the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood....'" See parallels in Matthew 26:27 and Mark 14:23.

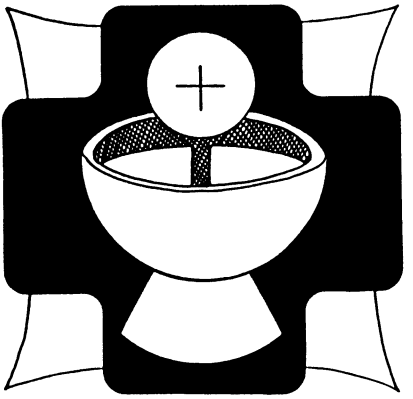
For the Pauline recital of the words of institution, see 1 Cor 11:25. When Paul elaborates his own theology of the Lord's supper he continues to employ the imagery of "bread and cup," never bread and wine: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26); "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?" (1 Cor 10:16).

[5] The only reference is to the "fruit of the vine" in the Synoptic Gospels (Mk 14:25, Mt 26:30, Lk 22:18); but grape juice or non-alcoholic wine could also fit this reference.

[6] Commentary on thesis #30, *Lutheran Forum* 29:23.

[7] "...in the nineteenth century the American temperance movement got some churches to substitute grape juice" (Commentary on thesis #30, *Lutheran Forum* 29:23). A Pennsylvania pastor in a LutherLink discussion calls the use of grape juice "...an aberration which cropped up in our area as a result of the Women's Christian Temperance Movement..."

[8] The ELCA statement allows that wine can be "either red or white" (44a). Thus, visible resemblance to blood is deemed not essential.



of traditions, confessional documents, and hymnody have inscribed the parallelism of "bread and wine" into our eucharistic thinking, but this parallelism is not biblical. "Bread" and "cup" are rather the essential biblical elements.

Drinking and eating

The New Testament specifically encourages both drinking and eating by everyone. Matthew's account of the last supper includes Jesus' command to "Drink of it, everyone" (*pantes*, Mt 26:27). Likewise, John 6 underscores the importance of both drinking and eating on the part of all believers:

> Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of humanity and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life... (John 6:53-56)

In these texts it is not just the reception of Jesus' body and blood that is important, but our actions of *eating* and *drinking*.[9]

Given the New Testament's encouragement of both eating and drinking Jesus' body and blood, it is unfortunate that the ELCA statement continues to uphold a clear preference for communing under one element over alternative options for bread or drink. This is detailed in sections 44c and 44d:

> Some communicants suffer from allergic reactions or are recovering from alcoholism. As suggested by the 1989 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America *A Statement on Communion Practices*, it is appropriate for them to receive only one of the elements. Their pastor may assure them that the crucified and risen Christ is fully present for them in, with, and under this one element (44d).

Assurance that Christ is fully present in one element is of great pastoral importance for communicants who are unable to partake of the bread or cup. However, the pastoral situation is different when communicants specifically ask for both elements. To insist on communion in only one kind for worshipers who desire both elements can become coercive pastoral practice. Failure to offer them an alternative to wine may have the effect of "withholding the cup," a practice criticized in our confessions.[10] As the ELCA committee cautioned in an earlier draft, offering multiple cups or beverage options risks detracting from

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[9] An earlier draft of the sacramental practices statement used this same argument to discourage communion by intinction: "Because the separate reception of both elements is a more adequate expression of eating and drinking in the sacramental meal, the practice of intinction (dipping the bread into the wine) may be used but is not encouraged" (C3.15a, "A First Draft for Study and Comment").

[10] See Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article VI. Worshipers who ask for an alcohol-free cup and are refused describe this as a uniquely vivid and shaming experience. The ELCA statement specifically argues that this is not withholding the cup, but I disagree.

unity.[11] In my view, however, the greater danger is that some Christians who long to both eat and drink—in accordance with Christ's invitation and command—will be excluded by our insistence on wine.[12]

"One bread"

Paul's reference to "one bread" in 1 Corinthians 10 should not be understood to mandate either "wine" or "one cup" in our celebrations of holy communion. The most compelling text sometimes cited for uniformity of elements at the Lord's Supper is 1 Cor 10:15-17:

> The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

This wonderful Pauline text indeed mandates a strong element of oneness and *koinonia* among members of the body of Christ in our practice of celebrating communion. Note, however, that *Paul does not extend the argument about oneness to the cup.* Where the reader might have expected Paul to add a parallel statement "because there is one cup, we who are many are one, because we all partake of the one cup," Paul is silent. Paul never speaks of "one cup."

If we want to be strict Pauline literalists, the emphasis in our celebrations of the Lord's supper should be on the bread rather than the cup. Paul's "one bread" statement would seem to mandate the use a single (gigantic?) loaf of bread in eucharistic celebrations. In light of 1 Corinthians 10, multiple small loaves (a common ELCA practice) might be more problematic than chalices containing a non-alcoholic alternative.

It is by no means obvious how 1 Corinthians 10-11 should be implemented in eucharistic practices today, however. Paul wrote these verses for a house church where it was not impractical for all worshipers to drink from the same cup or eat from the same loaf. In settings where hundreds of worshipers commune the question is how we can symbolically embody the oneness Paul describes in 1 Corinthians while also expediting the distribution of the elements.

The ELCA custom seems to be to permit multiple chalices and multiple loaves of bread, provided they contain the same substance. But once we have moved beyond "one bread," literal faithfulness to the biblical image is broken. If we already permit multiple chalices and multiple loaves served at multiple stations, it is hardly more divisive to permit a non-alcoholic beverage in one of the chalices.

Discerning the body

Finally, it gets down to the pastoral question: How do we offer full eucharistic hospitality to parishioners who cannot drink wine? I believe that Jesus' inclusive table hospitality should be our precedent. Christ's own example of compassion should carry greater weight in our discussions of eucharistic practices today.

Jesus transgressed orderly boundaries and conventional liturgical practice in order

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[11] "The practice of presenting two options for bread and two options for drink may diminish the sign of shared food eaten by all" (C3.14b).

[12] Unfortunately, the paragraph in the First Draft warning against excluding or shaming worshipers was deleted from the shorter final draft: "However the pastor and congregation choose to deal with this issue, their practice must not somehow exclude or diminish certain members of our communities, or convey a sense of shame" (C3.14c).

to eat and drink with those excluded by society, especially the sick and sinners. When his disciples attempted to send people away or restrict access to him for the sake of "good order," Jesus overruled them. He defied religious laws and guidelines when compassion demanded it, on the grounds that "The sabbath is made for people, not people for the sabbath" (Mk 2:27).

Concerns for inclusiveness and table hospitality were also important in eucharistic practices in the early church. In 1 Cor 11:17-34, Paul admonished the church in Corinth to modify practices in order to assure that the weakest and lowliest members of the community were fully included. No one was to partake of the meal without "discerning the body"—that is, being considerate of the whole body of Christ. No member of the church could receive the bread or cup while others were excluded or shamed (1 Cor 11:22,29).[13]

Today, refusal to offer an alternative to wine is a practice that can make people feel excluded or shamed, even when that is not our intent. The following comment from a student at another Lutheran seminary is illustrative of the pain some worshipers experience:

> The seminary offers only wine.... I have mostly gotten over the shame and the perception that everyone is looking at me and wondering why I'm not drinking wine, but I definitely feel excluded.... Theologically, I know that communing in one kind is still valid communion, and so I choose to do that now, rather than stay away altogether, but I definitely feel excluded, and I wonder how many others do too. (ELCA seminarian participating in LutherLink discussion)

Rather than hearing this seminarian's pain, many pastors in the LutherLink discussion responded by scolding her, saying that she "*should not* feel excluded" in receiving only the bread. But "should's" do not change people's feelings of exclusion or shame, and they ring hollow when pronounced by persons who themselves are able to commune in both kinds.

Jesus' inclusive table hospitality should be our precedent.

Parishioners who cannot drink wine are numerous: recovering alcoholics, pregnant and nursing women, people on certain medications, children whose parents do not want them to drink any alcohol. A clergy friend undergoing treatment for severe hepatitis was prohibited by doctor's orders from drinking any alcohol, even communion wine. At such a vulnerable time of illness he longed for full participation in the body of Christ, and he was grateful to attend a congregation that offered non-alcoholic wine.

Pastoral compassion is leading more and more ELCA congregations—almost 60%—now to offer a non-alcoholic alternative to wine, despite specific recommendations against this in previous ELCA statements.[14] According to recent statistics compiled by the ELCA Office of the Secretary, the number of congregations reporting that

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[13] At services where only wine is offered, this same concern for "discerning the body" of Christ sometimes leads some worshipers to refrain from communing, out of solidarity with those who cannot partake of the elements.

[14] "A Statement on Communion Practices," 1989.

Insistence on "wine only" gives far greater emphasis to wine than can be justified on biblical or pastoral grounds.

they offer "wine only" at communion has declined (in 1995) to 40.84%. The percentage of congregations reporting that they offer a non-alcoholic alternative has increased from 48% in 1993 to 57% in 1995.[15]

Do ecumenism and continuity with the church catholic require the exclusive use of wine? While wine is the norm in many churches, some sister churches (Methodist, Evangelical Covenant, some Reformed churches) historically use grape juice. At LSTC, offering grape juice is an important expression of ecumenical hospitality, since several staff and faculty are members of such churches. LSTC's closest neighbor seminary, McCormick, does not serve wine at its weekly communion services. As the ELCA moves toward strengthening ecumenical communion with churches that require wine, we must be cautious about imposing restrictions that will impede ecumenical communion with churches that permit non-alcoholic wine or grape juice.

In an era when the Christian church is growing in many countries where grape vines are not indigenous and grape wine is simply not available, ecumenical hospitality in the body of Christ requires great flexibility. Even within the ELCA, "Lutheranism" includes a number of cultures and traditions, among which may be congregations for which alternatives (such as rice wine or non-alcoholic wine) could be authentic local eucharistic expressions.

To summarize: Given the fact that neither "wine" nor "one cup" appears in New Testament descriptions of Holy Communion, Lutherans should allow wider latitude on how the cup is shared at Holy Communion. Scriptural encouragement for eating and drinking by everyone makes it imperative to find ways for all Christians to be able to partake of both the bread and the cup. Insistence on "wine only" gives far greater emphasis to wine than can be justified on biblical or pastoral grounds.

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[15] ELCA News Release, "Sacramental Practices Draft Released," April 24, 1995.

Theological Education: *Quo Vadis?*

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Cuando teniamos casi todas las respuestas, se nos cambiaran las preguntas.[1]

Circumstance

Two years ago the Department of Systematic Theology and Ethics of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago submitted for a faculty discussion a proposal for a reform of the curriculum. Circumstances had it that the proposal did not gain momentum. The reasons for that were many, and the time of opportunity is no longer retrievable. The reflections I offer here are neither an attempt at reinstating that discussion, nor do I presume to be speaking in the name of the department in what follows.

I would like to offer instead my own interpretation of what occasioned that reflection and some of the implications I see flowing out of the submitted proposal. If it did not seize the opportunity when it was first discussed and thus lost its relevance, the circumstances that occasioned its appearance are still very much on the agenda.

The proposal grew out of a sense of inadequacy of the present model of theological education and called for a profound redesigning of the curriculum. It grew out of two presuppositions: the affirmation of our vocation as interpreters of the gospel, and the recognition of the circumstances that condition and shape what we do. The proposal itself called for a revamping of the whole curriculum with structural implications for the organizational chart of the whole school. Most importantly, it was a proposal that suggested the abolition of the departments and divisions and, by consequence, of the disciplinary organization of theology. Instead of the traditional disciplines it proposed four thematic fields that would cross the various disciplines with roughly one quarter of the curriculum being dedicated to each field.

A *catechetical* field would concentrate in the Christian heritage, from the Bible to the present, offering a sort of literacy program in the Christian and Lutheran traditions. A *contextual* field was conceived as an area of concentration designed to explore and probe the interface between the heritage and different cultural milieus in which the church is inserted. A *constructive* field would offer the opportunity for stu-

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[1] "When we had almost all the answers, the questions were changed." Graffiti on the wall of the University of Bogota, Colombia.

dents to develop and elaborate their own theological position in face of the challenges of proclamation, outreach, and counseling. A fourth field, designated as *training*, was intended to offer students the practical exercises needed for ministry, including practica, C.P.E., teaching parish, and internship.

Although the reform proposed was rather profound, it was limited in scope primarily to LSTC in the context of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. What we probably failed to do at the time the proposal was presented was to show that the pressing need that called for it was not restricted to challenges that LSTC was or is facing alone, but to a new global scenario that is challenging and imposing changes in theological education on a worldwide scale. And as I am going to suggest, some of these challenges are already being met in some places, mainly in the Third World. That we should look at these places normally not identified with the venerable Western tradition should not surprise us in view of two facts. First, theology in the Third World is no longer subsidiary to the North Atlantic theologizing, and, second, the precarious material conditions in which these theologies are done magnify the problems theologies in the North Atlantic world are increasingly facing.

This realization is not a novelty on the international level, particularly among Lutherans. Some years ago William Lesher and Risto Lethonen, reflecting about the changing character of the international theological scene, proposed a major international consultation on Lutheran theological education. The idea of such a consultation resulted in a reworking of that original proposal which was submitted to the Executive Council of the Lutheran World Federation for implementation and approved at the Windhoek Council meeting in 1995. Preparations are currently underway, with Lesher taking the lead in implementing it, possibly in 1998.

Bewilderment

"When we had almost all the answers, the questions were changed!" The graffiti on the wall of the University of Bogota expresses a sense of bewilderment characteristic of our present condition and can be particularly addressed to the theological situation. It brings to mind the inadequacy of one of the most influential methodological proposals in modern theology. I am thinking of Tillich's famous method of correlation which suggests that questions arising from the situation interface with answers evincing from the Christian message. It took two decades after Tillich presented it in a systematic form[2] for the method to be sharply criticized for its failure to see that the Christian message itself was full of questions and many times it was the situation that provided answers to them.[3] Revisionist and feminist theologians were at the forefront of this criticism that has shown that new insights on the human condition, particularly those related to gender issues, brought about correctives to the Christian message. A case in point is the doctrine of sin. Feminist theologians have insisted that the situation of women implied a different answer than the one promoted by the mainstream of Western theological tradition.[4]

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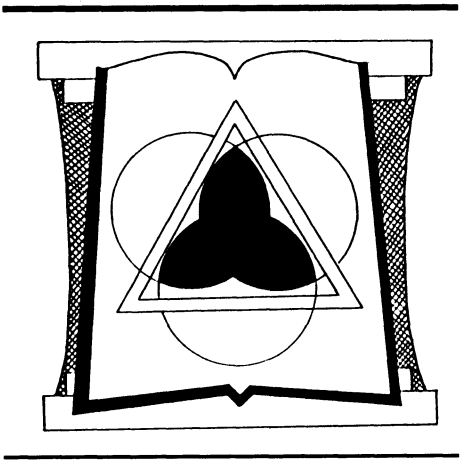
[2] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 59-66.

[3] David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 45-46.

[4] See Judith Plaskow, *Sex, Sin and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1980).

But even the idea of correlation itself, still maintained in the critical revisiting of Tillich's one-way street, supposed that answers would be produced for questions that could be formulated. But this is no longer as easily ascertained as it was even in the recent past. It does not mean that there are no questions, only that it has become harder and harder to agree upon them, particularly in regard to theology. Karl Marx's famous dictum that humanity can only raise to itself questions that it can answer has been in theology a problem in and of itself. Can we really have an answer, and above all a single answer for the religious quest? The inability of theologians to agree even on questions has been a mark of modern times when theological diversity, which always existed, has been in a situation where not only confessional communions are severed from each other, but diversity grows increasingly within them.

Let me give an example from the Lutheran theological tradition. It was in 1963 that the Lutheran World Federation held a worldwide assembly in Helsinki. The main theological item on the agenda was the adoption of a declaration on justification, the one central doctrine that the confessional writings call the article by which the church stands or falls. The document was under elaboration for years by the Commission on Theology. But even after being redrafted once more during the assembly itself, due to criticism that had been raised, the text was not adopted, and the Lutheran communion still lacks any normative text that translates the confessional declarations on justification for the contemporary situation.[5] The disagreement was not on the centrality of the doctrine and its confessional status. The problem was related to different views of the human condition that the doctrine should be able to address. The basic message implicitly given was that we



agree on the centrality of a doctrine as long as we don't define it, as long as it *fails* to meet the criterion of correlation.[6]

This has been interpreted as a basic deficiency of the Lutheran communion. But let me suggest that the real failure, if there was one, was to pretend that a universally agreed upon definition of a doctrine should be at all possible. And the lesson really is that it is not, which ironically does not eliminate the need of a doctrine as a *token* of a given identity. On the contrary, "justification" became no less a shibboleth of Lutheran identity although *and* because it was not defined.

The case of the Lutheran World Federation is exemplary because it illustrates some of the basic issues that we face in discussing theology and theological educa-

[5] It should be noted, however, that an important Joint Declaration on Justification is now being discussed between the Vatican and the LWF. Its adoption was twice postponed; the goal is now to have it adopted by 1998.

[6] For a discussion of the impact of this event for the Lutheran World Federation see my "And the Walls Come Tumbling Down: Globalization and Fragmentation in the LWF," *Dialog* 36 (Winter 1997), 32-39.

Past are the days in which centers of theological education would disseminate normative knowledge for the rest of the world.

tion since the emergence of the West as the hegemonic location for Christian theological reflection. Since then[7] and until the beginning of this century the majority of Christians in the world still lived in Europe or the U.S.A., despite the very aggressive and relatively successful evangelization of European colonies around the world, or the 19th century Protestant missionary crusades. The situation reversed itself during this century alone when most of the Christians are now found in the Third World. In the last 50 years since the creation of the Lutheran World Federation and of the World Council of Churches what we have is an increasing presence of worldwide voices that were almost totally absent from main theological discussions in the 1950s.[8] The case of the Helsinki Assembly (as it was also the case with the New Delhi Assembly of the WCC in 1961) is not at all unconnected with the fact that different voices were offering also differing understandings of the human condition, and, therefore, differing interpretations of the meaning of Christian doctrines, or at least a lack of clarity as to their meaning. It was realized that their concrete meaning could only be obtained in the dispersed fragments of their usage within different cultural locations. It is within a location that, as Mikhail Bakhtin has insisted, an utterance "will have a meaning different than it would under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot, in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve."[9]

Past are the days in which centers of theological education would disseminate normative knowledge for the rest of the world.[10] Even the optimist rage of socially and politically oriented theologies that started in the 1960s to raise their prophetic voices were coming from the North Atlantic white and male cultural context. The 1966 Geneva conference on Church and Society, that launched nothing less than a theology of revolution and would mark a turning point in recent theological history, was anything but what could be regarded

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[7] And when did that happen? Probably not before the great schism of 1054 but certainly only fulfilled in the symbolic year of 1492, when the last Moorish stronghold in western Europe, Granada, was re-conquered, and Western Christianity was brought to the New World.

[8] The fact that, among Lutherans, Europeans and North Americans are still the vast majority (almost 80%—although less so than in the past) should not serve as a disclaimer; it is rather a diagnosis that accounts for the fact that Lutherans have been slow in recognizing the challenges others are already addressing.

[9] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 428.

[10] I still remember that in the early 1970s (when I was in theological school and Latin American Liberation theologies had just started to raise a dissonant voice) one could name a few journals and a handful of schools (most of them in Europe and a few in the USA) that would suffice for anyone to get acquainted with and know what was going on in theology.

inclusive by present standards. Prophecy defined the discursive practice of the defense of the oppressed and marginalized, but with the voice of those who did not share the condition of the ones being defended. This is no longer the case, and this is what now is different! There is no longer a center of dissemination, no longer a program like the ones some postmodernists call "master narratives."[11]

The anemic project

What we have gained in assessing the present theological condition is the awareness that theological knowledge is a situated knowledge, and its value lies precisely in its embodiment. And this is a translatable knowledge, but one that requires familiarity with the context within which it emerges, and the painful awareness that translation is also treason, that faithfulness never fully succeeds in avoiding betrayal. It is in the acceptance of this dynamic ambiguity that something can be gained at all. It is in the pristine avoidance of ambiguity, in the search for a prelapsarian language, either by glossing over differences or by the bigotry of having my language game to be the only true one, that we have lost more than we have gained.

Let me give an example. In the *Garden of Epicurus*, Anatole France has an illustrative story regarding the language of metaphysics that I think can also be applied to theology, particularly under the present condition that I tried to describe above. The story is a discussion between two characters regarding a sentence found in a book on metaphysics: "The spirit possesses God in proportion as it participates in the absolute."[12] The discussion is about the abstract character of the language that metaphysicians develop in their attempt to overcome the mythical rootedness of the concepts they employ. One of the characters offers the following analogy:

> I was thinking—thinking how Metaphysicians, when they make a language for themselves, are like knife-grinders, who, instead of knives and scissors, should put medals and coins to the grindstone, to efface the lettering, date and type. When they have worked away till nothing is visible in their crown-pieces, neither King Edward, the Emperor William, nor the Republic, they say: "These pieces have nothing either English, German or French about them; we have freed them from all limits of time and space; they are not worth five shillings any more; they are of inestimable value, and their circulation is extended infinitely." They are right in speaking thus. By this needy knife-grinder's activity words are changed from a physical to a metaphysical acceptation. It is obvious that they lose in the process; what they gain by it is not so immediately apparent.[13]

The argument concludes by one of the characters showing to his metaphysician friend that the most the latter has accomplished is to efface with abstract conceptuality the concrete mythical signification at the origin of that statement, creating what he called not something superior to a myth, but "an anaemic mythology without body or blood."[14]

The example I gave above about the doctrine of justification can serve also as an illustration of a similar process of efface-

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[11] Jean-Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Mussumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[12] Anatole France, *The Garden of Epicurus*, trans. Alfred Allinson (London: John Lane, 1923), 193.

[13] France, 194-5.

[14] France, 214.

ment that plagues theology, as much as metaphysics, creating the double process I have described: the broadening *ad absurdum* of the exchange value of theological terms and concepts, and their simultaneous restrictions to semantic pockets controlled by experts and limited to myths that are no longer clearly inscribed or assumed.[15] And I think we perpetuate this theological anemia the more we dissociate theological knowledge and theological constructions from their situations, or to phrase it differently, from the mythical and symbolic context in which they emerge and within which they gain life, body and blood, i.e., where they have use value before they gain exchange value.

What I regard as being the characteristic of our time is not that we are more or that we are less mythological in orientation, that our God-talk is more or less embodied. The point is that we in the post-Bultmannian era in theology have been able to overcome myths while sharing an array of mythologies that are not conversant with each other. And they are not conversant with each other precisely because we believed that we could leave them behind in the elusive search for a common narrative above and beyond the body mythic, the place where the metaphorical and the literal sense meet each other, where the literal is the metaphorical and the metaphor the literal, where justification is performance and performance is justification.

Claiming the tradition

This sense of fragmentation comes together with a greater sense of integration. The local and the global, concepts that can be set in diametrical opposition, are yet closer together than ever, as the neologism "glocalization" poignantly expresses.[16] In the theological arena this has been well illustrated by the surprising recent ecumenical bilateral agreements among many church bodies bypassing the so-called "ecumenical winter" of the World Council of Churches. But simultaneously we also observe the tremendous multiplication of churches that have grown increasingly away from the consensus-building languages of mainstream denominations and of the Unit of Faith and Order of the WCC. And more than this: the new ecclesial and ecumenical formations often dribble the taxonomic practices that aim at classifying them according to some variables that would allow us to know the others before meeting them.[17]

In this situation the question that concerns theological education is much more elemental than issues pertaining to curriculum, method, or pedagogy. It is a question addressed to the legitimacy of the theological enterprise, namely: who is the bearer of the tradition or the traditions? This ques-

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[15] The double-sidedness of the phenomenon could be made more clear if we would carry the analogy further. If the metaphysician effaces a real coin giving to it a universal but negligible value, the restriction of theology to a language game could be compared to the use of play-money that equally has a negligible value outside of the play.

[16] "It has become commonplace to claim that modernity fragments, dissociates. Some have even presumed that such fragmentation marks the emergence of a novel phase of social development —a postmodern era. Yet the unifying features of modern institutions are just as central to modernity—specially in the phase of high modernity—as the disaggregating ones." Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 27.

[17] And let us remember that pluralism, or the "end of heresy" within Christendom can be dated back to the Reformation, roughly at the time in which European Christianity affirmed and expanded itself oversees.

tion about tradition seems rather pedestrian and might sound strange in the context of fragmentation I am addressing. I would like to claim, however, that it is at the core of what theological education is all about. It is the question of the handing over of a given story in time and space, i.e., of tracing the movement of the *logos*.

Let me suggest that three proposals that we have had historically should be revisited for both the promises and limits they entail. They represent roughly the main traditional branches of Christianity: Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodoxy. They can be defined as the *magisterial*, the *hermeneutic*, and the *iconic* model. Each one has its own way of claiming and defending faithfulness. And each one would regard the others as betraying the content of the faith by the *logic* implicitly adopted to elicit it. But it is also the case that each can be justified only internally. They are self-referential.

1. According to the first, the bearer of the tradition is the church represented by its teaching office, the *magisterium*. In the church the deposit of revealed knowledge is kept and administered by those who have been given the keys that access this knowledge. It is not a knowledge generally available, which prevents a broader or "democratic" intervention, for it is the teaching office of the church alone that allows for the correct interpretation of the scriptures (as the foundational if yet still internally undecideable narrative of the faith). The surplus of a not generally accessible revelation allows for an openness in the process of handing over the knowledge while simultaneously tying it up to the institutional formation in which it is deposited. In this understanding of tradition, theological education is most clearly subservient to the church, not only formally (pledging allegiance to the confessions of the church), but also materially (promoting the doctrinal content that the church upholds).

> The question that concerns theological education is much more elemental than issues pertaining to curriculum, method, or pedagogy.

2. The *hermeneutic* model, associated with the Protestant Reformation, does not allow for any surplus of revealed knowledge to be available in any special calling or office. It relies on the idea that the basic biblical narrative is in itself a sufficient and clear foundation for theological interpretation to build on, and not an undecideable narrative. If in the magisterial model the bishop would be the bearer of the tradition, in this model it is the theologian who, not by special calling, but by scholarship and devotion, is able to regain the textual meaning of the narrative. This understanding of tradition unfolds three interrelated variations and concrete applications of the basic tenets of the model.

One, that could be called the canon within the canon, restricts the meaning of the narrative submitting it to a controlling paradigm, a center in turn of which the rest of the narrative gravitates and receives its hermeneutic key (e.g. the exodus narrative, the cross, justification by faith, the Kingdom of God, the lordship of Christ, etc.).

The second variation tacitly assumes a

With the present pervasive sense of relativism, where do we go for the truth?

demarcated canon to work prescriptively on present circumstances bypassing or minimizing other historical mediations, which has received the pejorative epithet of fundamentalism.

The third subtype expands the limits of a demarcated canon to include other "classic" texts that represent forgotten or marginal stories which need to be assessed to account for common experiences of groups not fully represented in the hegemonic narratives. Feminist, African, and Asian theologies have insisted in integrating (and at times even substituting) extra canonical narratives into those canonically adopted.

3. The third, the *iconic* model, is closer, but not exclusive to, the Eastern Orthodox churches and is largely affirmed also in the West by mystical movements. This is a different conception of tradition, for it builds its own self-understanding neither under the presupposition of a hidden reservoir of revelation, nor on the hermeneutic expertise of theological scholarship, but on the self-disclosing power of the religious representations. The representations, pictorial or not, are what maintain the continuity of the content. It is neither the magisterium, nor the hermeneutic scholarship, but the immediate exposure to the icon, in which the epiphany indwells, that yields the theological content of the tradition. The icon, the allegorical depiction of the Trinity, the figure of a saint, the apparition of the Virgin, or a mystical vision are not the object of a theological inquiry but the medium through which theology becomes equated with doxology.

None of these proposals for understanding tradition can be said to be irrelevant. None can be said to work without a strong understanding of tradition, and an affirmation of how the Christian story is being handed over, and what its content is.[18] They all are still significant ways in which tradition is still of import as well as imported into the present. However, it is precisely their concomitant presence in a world that has become globalized that has raised the awareness of their relativity. Choosing one of these options is now no longer a self-evident assumption in the way it would have been for the traditional Catholics, Orthodox, or Protestants, who until not long ago functioned *de facto* if not *de jure* with the understanding of discrete spaces within which the self referentiality of a tradition was taken for granted.[19] What has taken the place of traditional theological discourses is a heteroglot practice that has brought to the theological forum different and dissonant voices. Roman Catholics have raised the primacy of hermeneutics, Protestants have developed iconographies, the Ortho-

[18] The old commonplace of the split between tradition and scripture as descriptive of the differences between Catholics and Protestants is therefore only a caricature.

[19] The formula of the Augsburg Religious Peace—*cuius regio, eius religio*—remains as the bluntest statement of such a principle that demarcates a tradition within a given space. See my article "Re(li)gion: The Lord of History and Illusory Space," in Viggo Mortensen, ed., *Region and Religion: Land, Territory, and Nation from a Theological Perspective* (Geneva: LWF, 1994), 79-95.

dox have appealed to the magisterial normativity of the Ecumenical Councils, and so on. But most important is the awareness that any of these understandings of tradition with its own internal referentiality now occupies the same space with competing understandings of tradition rendering it relative. This is what heteroglossy is about; the other is not elsewhere, but shares the same semantic field.

Departing from the main guiding principles for the understanding of tradition, without denying them, the present condition imposes a "complicating" factor on world Christianity. It disrupts the fundamental presupposition of all of the previously discussed understandings of tradition by challenging the presupposition they share in common, namely that there is a single principle, a *logos* around which the unity of a tradition is maintained and centered. It is enough here to mention the emergence of Pentecostalism or of the charismatic movement in mainline denominations to give to this heteroglot practice a sociological bearing. But what has happened with the emergence of liberation, ecological, and feminist theologies can be regarded as part of the same phenomenon that can be called as a messianic awakening.[20] Different as these movements are in their proposals, they inhabit the same dissonant phenomenon of theological constructions raising the awareness of the unavoidable implication of treason in all tradition, that a translator (*traduttore*) is also a traitor (*traditore*).

With the loss of a self-evident understanding of the theological tradition, what is gained is not only the promise of renewal in theological constructions, but also the risk of losing theological orientation and public responsibility. An increasing sense of a global table talk has made theology much more multicultural, decentered, but simultaneously it has also often been driven into the opposite direction of developing semantic pockets in which a theological conversation finds itself confined to untranslatable language games. In other words, I do not think we are either better off or worse under these conditions. Only the risk and the undecideability has drastically increased, and so has the stratification among different positions. Mainly two of these positions can be here identified: one tries to construct a theological Esperanto in face of the experience of fragmentation, and the other attempts to make its own idiosyncratic expression of the faith catholic.[21] Different as they claim to be, both are united by the same disdain toward the embodied character of religious language in the variety of expressions it assumes. With the present pervasive sense of relativism, where do we go for the truth? Where do we go to establish a sound basis for theological education? Do we go back to one of the meanings of tradition and entrench ourselves in its grammar as a universal one? Or do we go beyond them to a meta-confessional level and declare that they are all the same, only their language needs to be cleansed from contextual impurities?

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[20] The common pneumatic origin of feminism, liberationism, and pentecostalism has already been recognized by Heribert Mühlen, "Der gegenwartige Aufbruch der Geisterfahrung und die Unterscheidung der Geiter," in Walter Kasper, ed., *Gegenwart des Geistes: Aspekte der Pneumatologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1979); and more recently by Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmeister (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), specially pp. 1-49.

[21] These positions can be traced back to the Enlightenment's attempt to find a common ground for all religions to come together in a natural religion and in the supernaturalist reaction to the Enlightenment affirming the irreducible character of positive revelation. In this sense this is not a new problem.

A pneumatic theology?

After what has been said, how should one go about suggesting a program for theological education? Am I saying, after Napoleon, that theology is but a fable agreed upon? It might be, provided that a fable has a way of claiming a truth, much in the sense I suggested a myth is: a truth-claim without the requirements to be explanatory, or of demonstrating its inner consistency. Brigit Brophy stated it sharply: "I suspect the correct answer to 'What have we put in the place of religion?' is 'What have we put in the place of believe in fairies?'"[22] Although her analogy strikes a sarcastic chord, the point is well taken: There are truth-claims that belong to other categories than the one submitted to the modern canons of univocality. To do theology is to make truth-claims. But their nature is different.

What I am pleading for is not a revised theoretical status of the theological discipline, a new Christian Dogmatics, a new Systematic Theology, or a new Encyclopedia of the Christian Faith; I am not giving a new definition of its field or demarcating the boundaries of its legitimacy. I am trying to subvert the question and to ask for *the theologian's practice of doing theology.* Instead of probing the *object* of the theological discourse or the theological discourse as object, I am interested in asking how is it being done when it is being done. This should be the fundamental question pertaining to theological education under the conditions I have described. Within the parameters of this question we should not be discussing theology as a discipline, as a theory of religious representations, or as a grammar of the faith. We should be rather concerned in seeing it as a heteroglot practice of people naming their relationship to God and the world and asking how theology is being done when it is done. The question is for the way one makes theological truth-claims about God and the world, and not about the disciplinary status of such claims. It is a question that regards the subject of truth-claims in their practice of claiming them, not the claims in themselves. Can we think of theological education as a practice of making utterances about God and the world and study how these utterances function, what empowers them, under which conditions are they made, what effect they have, and how they establish normativity? All of this instead of focusing primarily on the consistency, faithfulness, and explanatory capability of the utterances themselves severed from the subjects that make them? In summary, why not a *pneumatic* (the act of voicing) instead of a *logic* (the objective utterance) and, therefore, *logocentric* approach to theological education?

This is probably the most important and disturbing challenge for theology today when trying to work within any of the understandings of tradition laid down above. The surrendering of a logocentric understanding of tradition raises the fears that a lack of criteria will undermine any possibility for the discernment of spirits. This is the "complication." Charismatic and Pentecostal movements have been for a while the target of this sort of criticism. And there is much to say in defense of these criticisms. However, the incapability of logocentric theologies in dealing with this phenomenon should be distinguished from the incapability of raising at all pneumatic criteria for the discernment of spirits.[23] The divine and the

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[22] Cited by Paul Sponheim, "The Knowledge of God," in C. E. Braaten and R. Jenson, eds., *Christian Dogmatics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 1:251.

[23] A proposal for criteria for the discernment of spirits is elaborated by Welker, *God the Spirit*, around the concepts of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God.

demonic stand side by side in an often undecideable locations, as Luther knew so well.[24] The logocentric traditions offer a way of avoiding this undecideability in providing criteria by which traditions can be discerned. These criteria were presented in the three options for understanding tradition outlined above. They fail, however, to recognize that the options might lie outside the parameters of the very tradition being claimed, and simultaneously inside of the same (heteroglot) semantic field. The Spirit shifts keys unexpectedly, produces irreducible differences. The pneumatic principle augments the risk, but it also offers windows of possibility.

A proposal

The late Paulo Freire,* well known Brazilian educator, ecumenist, and lay theologian, has been a seminal thinker for Latin American theology. The reason for the relevance of his thought for theology was his conviction that it is in religious language, in the talk about God and the world, that the naming of one's world reached its most encompassing expression; and it is this naming that lies at the root of his program of bringing reality into consciousness (conscientização). The reference to God in this naming is what lends ultimacy to a discourse. His understanding of education, and theological education in particular, as a practice of freedom, entails a program for theological education which distances itself from the conventional attempts of redefining theology in terms of a discipline, which he called a "banking" form of education. Linking Freire's insight of theology as a practice of freedom with what I presented above allows me to draw on three areas in which theological education is meeting fundamental challenges. And with this I come full circle, suggesting the implications I see for three of the thematic fields the Department of Systematic Theology and Ethics had proposed: the contextual, the constructive, and the catechetical.

The first has to do with the diversity of contexts in which theology articulates itself. This seems to be an altogether familiar topic, a commonplace in contemporary theological self-understanding. Theology must be situated. But normally this situatedness refers only to different cultural matrices that we need to learn and be aware of. But this is only part of the challenge. The greater challenge is that the demand made on theological education is not only related to different but accessible cultural contexts, but to the fact that they themselves change the pedagogical practice as such. These contexts are determined by socioeconomic, cultural, and political conditions that often do not allow for the leisure of full time engagement in theological studies, as has been presupposed in the Western theological tradition. This intensive, expensive, and

> Why not a *pneumatic* instead of a *logic* and, therefore, *logocentric* approach to theological education?

[24] WA 31/I, 250: "God cannot be God without being first the devil... the devil will not be the devil before being God."

* Freire died May 2, 1997.

heavy model, dominant in the traditional centers of theological training, has, at most, made adjustments to the increasing need of students who take part-time jobs. But the situation is different for the majority of Christians that live under the poverty level and don't have any financial cushion to even try a regular academic program, not to mention move or commute to school. In this regard Asia, Africa, and Latin America have developed a number of "informal" theological programs to address this need. The success of these programs (that don't substitute for but add to formal theological training) has been such that the gap between formal theological expertise and grassroots religious reflection has been closing and unexpected theological voices are suddenly heard employing different modes of utterance. When we hear in the First World concerns about growing theological and biblical illiteracy,[25] we have the symptoms of a problem that is being already addressed elsewhere.

The nature of theological publications has also been changing. The so called "big" theological literature, the books published by commercial publishing houses with their financial and legal constraints, has given place to a "small" literature: a pamphleteering practice of theological production that is inexpensive and bypasses copyright restrictions. Much of it is eventually incorporated into the "big" literature and enjoys a longer life, but their origin and efficacy lies in their grassroots origin.[26]

The second challenge has as its consequence that theology becomes an anti-disciplinary constructive practice. The growing fragmentation of theological disciplines, the specialization of knowledge, has not only created unsurpassable conversational barriers among the disciplines themselves, but has isolated the theological academy from other forms of knowledge.[27]

Interdisciplinary proposals have been ways of addressing the problem of relating the different disciplines, but have left untouched or even reinforced the conception of theology as a fragmented disciplinary knowledge within the confines of the Western traditional disciplines. Theological education as a practice of freedom is neither a disciplinary nor an interdisciplinary endeavor, but an anti-disciplinary effort of constantly breaking away with disciplinary restrictions in recognizing forms of knowledge that defy classification within the traditional theological disciplines, challenging therefore conformity to the norms and regimes that regulate them. Not only are ethics, Bible, pastoral counseling, or apologetics enmeshed in a single theological argument, but myths, science, folk tales, literature, and ritual practices swerve their way into the discussions and need to be dealt with in a way it would sound preposterous for the valets of Western *Wissenschaft*. Constructive theology has become a poetic activity in the sense that poetry can

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[25] See Darrell Jodock, "The American Context and the Authority of the Bible," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 23:2 (April 1996), 85-103.

[26] Most Latin American theological production that has made it to the book market in the North Atlantic world has this pre-history. See Hermann Brandt, *Gottes Gegenwart in Lateinamerika: Inkarnation als Leitmotiv der Befreiungstheologie* (Hamburg: Steinmann & Steinmann, 1992), particularly pp. 96-105 ("Zur Gattung der 'Kleinliteratur'").

[27] Edward Farley, *Theologia: Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), distinguishes the pre-modern understanding of theology as an unitary discipline from the present situation in which "theology as a discipline persists, but as specialties and discrete elements in the theological school.... As a result, theological education becomes an amalgam of academic specialization and culture adaptation" (151).

be defined as a transgression of discipline and grammar in the search for images, metaphors, and allegories that will give shape to religious convictions. It is in the opening of disciplinary strictures that language is gained.

Finally there is also a catechetical challenge that addresses the theological agenda. Far from being a departure from the traditions, the new theological challenge is probing deeper into what is handed over. Catechesis means to sound forth or to resound an echo. By extension it means to amplify the sound and the whispers that inform existence. It is in this sense that it in*structs*, it gives shape to our being. It provides a language in and through which being can be housed. Those familiar with the Base Christian Communities in Latin America will be able to recognize them as catechetical accomplishments. Persecuted and excluded people found in the religious and biblical imagery a language to name their world, a world overtaxed by the "official story," incapable of conveying their sense of hope and transcendence as well as of fears and demons. Tradition, whether handed over through the teachings of the church, through images and epiphanies, through the renewal of biblical studies, has been a decisive factor in people gaining language to name their world. But the emphasis lies in the naming and not in what is being named. This voice, once owned again, has been able to reestablish the mythical roots of the people's imagination and connect the metaphors with literal acceptations. Metaphors become more than metaphors once people name the pharaoh, their desert experiences, the devil, their epiphanies, their crosses, and their resurrection. Catechesis is exactly this: the resounding of a language that maps out our experiences and vindicates the right to celebrate in freedom a feast to God (Exod 5:1).

Metaphors become more than metaphors once people name the pharaoh, their desert experiences, the devil, their epiphanies, their crosses, and their resurrection.

This implies also a revisioning of the task of the educator. The word used in Latin America for the role of the theological educator engaged with the grassroot movement is *asesor*, which etymologically means the one who sits by (*ad-sedere*), and in the extended meaning is the one who assesses a given situation implying that the decisions to be made are left to the one being advised.

With these three challenges theology proceeds in any of the discursive modes described above—in any of the three "logics" ascribed to tradition (and any other we might isolate)—and it needs all of them in affirming the subjective practices it performs in its task of truth-telling, in its attempt at being faithful to the one who claimed to *be* the truth (John 14:6), but left with no answer the one who asked him *what* was the truth (John 18:38). The questions have changed indeed, but the answer remains still the same!

Book Reviews

The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions. By Ian G. Wallis. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 84. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995. xix and 281 pages. Cloth. $59.95.

Wallis' stated objective in this revision of his 1991 Sheffield dissertation is "to assess whether early Christian traditions bear witness to interest in the faith of Jesus Christ and, if they do, to ask why" (p. 4). Though this is primarily an exegetical study, Wallis pays close attention to the theological issues raised in the texts he examines. Many readers will find Wallis' nuanced discussion of these broader concerns refreshing and stimulating; a few, however, will feel that at times Wallis permits a larger scheme to intrude upon the evidence.

The study falls into three parts: ch. 1, a general introduction treating the "*milieu* of faith" in which early Christian tradition took shape; chs. 2-5, an exegetical study of the relevant canonical texts (the Synoptic Gospels, the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Epistles, Hebrews, and Revelation); and ch. 6, where the discussion is extended beyond the canon to other early Christian literature. Ch. 7 is a general conclusion.

Wallis' chief contribution lies in the panoramic scope with which he treats an already much discussed subject. According to Wallis, the church's interest in Jesus' faith expressed itself along two "trajectories": the paradigmatic, Jesus' faith as example, and the theological or soteriological, Jesus' faith (=his death on the cross) as the basis of salvation. The theological trajectory was increasingly taken up with the person of Jesus as the "canon" of faith, so that by the fourth century interest in what Jesus had done was preempted by the question of who Jesus was. The paradigmatic trajectory, on the other hand, ended in the Arrian controversy, where for purely polemical reasons the human faith of Jesus was discounted.

It is inevitable that a study of this scope raises as many questions as it answers and that it will leave many unconvinced. Nevertheless, Wallis has provided a positive contribution, as well as a comprehensive and thought-provoking introduction, to an important debate.

Paul A. Holloway
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

The Beloved Disciple Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John. By James H. Charlesworth. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995. xxv and 481 pages. Cloth. $30.00.

The title picks up the enigmatic but well-known description: "the disciple whom Jesus loved." This description appears five times in the Gospel of John and has been the subject of intense scrutiny from the second through the present century. According to Dr. Charlesworth, Professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Princeton Theological Seminary, that scrutiny has led to at least 22 published hypotheses since 1730 (p. 434).

Why another study? There is need for further exploration since many contemporary scholars no longer identify the Beloved Disciple with John, the son of Zebedee. A re-examination of *primary texts* is urgent. The subtitle "Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John" offers a second response to the question. The present monograph seeks to discover if the Beloved Disciple may be identified with the Fourth Gospel, or more precisely stated, whether the Gospel is based on one of Jesus' disciples, indeed, one of the Twelve.

Professor Charlesworth ventures into the risky waters of seeking to provide a better understanding of the Beloved Disciple and his connection with this Gospel. He succeeds admirably as one would anticipate from the scholar who has edited *The Old Testament Pseudepigraphy* and

who is at present Director of Princeton Seminary's Dead Sea Scroll Project. The breadth and depth of this monograph are apparent in the chapter headings which follow the Introduction and precede the conclusion. They are (in sequence): An Exegesis of the Passages in the Gospel of John that Mention the Beloved Disciple; The Beloved Disciple; Scholars' Suggestions; Fresh Insights Suggesting that Thomas is the Beloved Disciple; Evidence and Speculation as to Who is Not the Beloved Disciple; The Beloved Disciple and "the Other"; The Johannine School and the School of Thomas; The Beloved Disciple and Peter; and The Gospel of Thomas and Thomas as the Beloved Disciple.

The author proceeds on the assumption that extensive research in these waters must provide credible answers to eight questions, three of which are: Why is the Beloved Disciple described as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"? Why is the Beloved Disciple not mentioned until John 13 in which the Last Supper is described? and Why does the author of John 21 feel compelled to endorse the Beloved Disciple's credibility? The eight questions incorporate major paradigm shifts in New Testament research. They are given serious consideration throughout this scholarly enterprise and, in fact, are provided with summary answers in concluding discussions.

Charlesworth's publication is intended primarily for scholars (p. 10). Is this then a study to be recommended to pastors who really have little time to listen to or read another lecture on "Who Was the Beloved Disciple?" That depends upon the individual's specific scholarly and pastoral interests. The author advances the hypothesis that Thomas is the Beloved Disciple. This is novel, courageous and exciting. His hypothesis is regularly sustained by careful exegesis. That exegesis incorporates difficult passages such as 20:8, "the other disciple... believed," 14:5, "the way," and subjects such as the witness behind the Gospel, crises confronting the Johannine community, and extensive religious movements in the first and second centuries C.E.

Those interested in the identity of the Beloved Disciple and his connection with the tradition behind the Gospel of John will appreciate an exposition presented with clarity and excitement. As other scholars have already indicated, this monograph will soon be recognized as a standard work on the Beloved Disciple.

Merlin H. Hoops
Trinity Lutheran Seminary

The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response. By Pamela Cooper-White. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. xiv and 334 pages. Paper. $19.00.

Pamela Cooper-White tackles the job of bringing together into one book the many types of violence against women. She sets violence against women in a framework, provides information about various types of violence against women, and gives information for pastoral response and the response of the faith community.

The first section of the book deals with the framework of violence against women. Cooper-White addresses two interlocking themes, the objectification of women and exploitative power, which help to define and analyze the violence. She explores the connection between pornography and violence, rooting it in these themes.

The second section explores various forms of violence against women, including sexual harassment, rape, battering, clergy sexual abuse, child sexual abuse, and ritualistic abuse. Both information on the violence and information on pastoral response are included.

The third section deals with the church's response to violence against women. It deals with the issue of dealing with violent men, as well as how the clergy and the church community can empower women. She indicates how the Christian community can help stop the violence against women and thereby do more than provide ministry to the women who are abused.

Cooper-White makes the argument that a crucial element in stopping the violence requires reestablishing power and authority so that it is not misused to perpetrate, incite, or collude with violence.

In various sections, the statistics that Cooper-White cites may be questioned. For

example, the statistics given for battered women versus battered men have been reported differently in other resources. Cooper-White acknowledges the problem of violence against men, but insists that it is caused by different issues.

Cooper-White's dual focus on aiding women who are victims of violence and working to change the power structures that lead to the objectification and abuse of women makes this book very helpful. It is written for religious professionals and others in the church who are ready to help the church address the issues of violence against women.

Karen E. Tews
Wartburg Theological Seminary

The New Interpreter's Bible. *Vol. 1: General Articles on the Bible and the Old Testament, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus.* Edited by Leander E. Keck, et al. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994. xx and 1195 pages. Cloth. $65.00; Vol. 4: *1 & 2 Maccabees, Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, Job, Psalms.* Edited by Leander E. Keck, et al. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996. xviii and 1287 pages. Cloth. $65.00; Vol. 7: *Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature, Daniel, the Twelve Prophets.* Edited by Leander E. Keck, et al. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996. xviii and 887 pages. Cloth. $55.00.

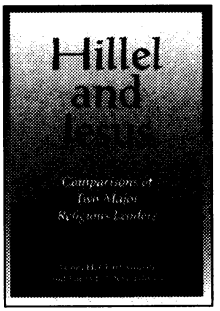
Walk into almost any pastor's office of my generation, and you're likely to see the twelve volumes of the Interpreter's Bible positioned on the shelves. This was the first major commentary series in English after World War II and after the publication of the RSV. It featured the text of the KJV and RSV at the top of the middle, exegetical comments by leading scholars of the day in the middle, and homiletical helps at the bottom of the page. Many of those commentaries have stood the test of time—I think of Deuteronomy by G. Ernest Wright or of Isaiah 40-66 by James Muilenburg—but much is now dated, including, especially, the homiletical helps, which were written by someone other than the exegete and often at considerable distance from his [sic] interpretation.

Now the New Interpreter's Bible has begun to appear (Volumes 8-9, dealing with the four Gospels, are also available)—in hardback, but also in CD-Rom format, and it promises to be better, and much more inclusive, than its famous namesake. The writers are not just liberal Protestants, as in IB, but they come from all streams of the Christian faith—including evangelicals, Roman Catholics, and Lutherans (Fretheim, Klein, Nickelsburg, Olson, Simundson, and Tinker). Women make up about 25% of the contributors, and there are also writers who are African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, and Native American. At the top of each page now are the NRSV and the NIB, and the exegesis and hermeneutical reflections are done by the same person. Historical criticism still plays a role, but now alongside or even replaced by social analysis, rhetorical criticism, narrative criticism, and all the rest of the current methodologies. Commentaries on the apocrypha are also included in the NIB.

A great feature of the older IB is repeated in NIB, namely, articles on various issues related to interpretation. In fact, they make up more than 300 pages in Volume 1, covering such topics as biblical authority, history of interpretation, methods of reading the Bible, the role of social location in biblical interpretation, histories of Israel and its religion, introduction to textual criticism, and many more. These articles alone are well worth the price of admission.

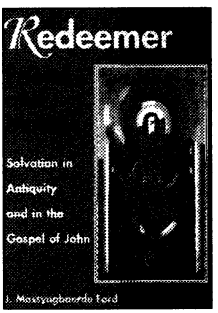
Terence E. Fretheim, a Lutheran, wrote the commentary on Genesis, with attention to how God's redemptive work serves the entire creation, and with very few allusions to the source critical theory. Instead, he emphasizes literary approaches in order to perceive how these texts work as texts. Genesis 3 is not so much a story of the past, but a reflection, in fundamental ways, of human life in every age. Walter Brueggemann, who literally needs no introduction, interprets Exodus as an exilic document and investigates "how this text, in new, demanding, and dangerous circumstances, continues to offer subversive possibilities for our future." In dealing with the problematic imagery of Yahweh as warrior, Brueggemann observes that God's use of force against the power of oppression is not experienced as violent by those who are, in fact,

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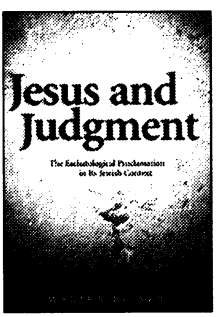
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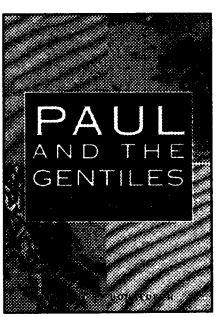
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oppressed. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., newly elected president of Gordon Conwell Seminary, assumes a mediating position about the authorship of Leviticus: "There is no sole, higher-critical position; rather, there are a number of quite diverse ways by means of which to understand the origins of the Pentateuch and, hence, Leviticus." He emphasizes God's absolute otherness in the book and the concomitant call for followers of God to be holy. Among the civil laws that are antiquated in many ways, he finds impartiality in the administration of justice, fairness toward the poor, provision for unemployed persons, and scrupulous honesty in all business dealings.

Commentators in volume 4 are Robert Doran for 1 and 2 Maccabees, Carol A. Newsom for Job, and Clinton McCann, Jr. for Psalms. Adele Berlin's article on Hebrew poetry is accessible to the non-specialist and well aware of the many significant and exciting developments in understanding this literature in the last generation. She notes that intensification, and not just synonymity, characterizes parallelism, as in these brutal lines: "They raped women in Zion, Virgins in the Judean towns" (Lam 5:11). Newsom notes that Job ends in a manner that frustrates closure, and signals that the conversation it has started about the nature of divine-human relations is not finished but requires to be continued by new communities of voices.

Volume 7 begins with the commentary on Daniel by Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, a Quaker. He alerts readers that Daniel assumes that people of faith will inevitably find themselves in opposition to the state and to idolatrous patriotism. He frequently draws on the experiences of subordinated peoples in order to highlight the similarities in experience between the writers of Daniel and modern conquered or colonized peoples and to urge Christians to accept a certain alienation from the dominant culture and its religious traditions of dominance. On the commentaries on the Minor Prophets—each written by a different author—we have space only to call attention to three. Gale A. Yee's sensitive commentary on Hosea notes that if the prophet had been a woman we would visualize the profound relationship between God and Israel from the perspective of a woman, who experiences spousal infidelity in distinctly different ways than does a man. Phyllis Trible, a pioneer in feminist exegesis, exercises her other passion in an excellent rhetorical commentary on Jonah. She observes that the book of Jonah does not disclose its purpose and that most attempts to discover that purpose have either tied it to a presumed (and unprovable) date or have concentrated on parts of the story as if they equal the whole. Daniel Simundson wrestles with the old question of whether a prophet of judgment like Micah could also issue oracles of hope.: "In public preaching and private counseling, when is it time to proclaim the law... the need for repentance? Should we wait until someone has finally 'hit the bottom' before we begin to speak of hope? The struggle to discern the right word for the right time remains very much with us.

I would say that these three volumes—and, in fact, the whole twelve volume set—should be found on the shelves of everyone in this generation of pastors. And in church libraries, too.

Ralph W. Klein

Compton's Interactive Bible. New International Version. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996. $49.95.

This computer program is aimed at lay Bible readers and offers them a wealth of information: the text of the New International Version, a concordance (with 14,477 entries), fourteen maps, a series of timelines on the Old and New Testament, a Bible dictionary with 3,446 brief entries, and more than 900 multimedia resources—pictures of art, biblical sites, flora and fauna, audio introductions to the books of the Bible, and much more.

Music ranges from Arab flute tunes to "We Three Kings" and Haydn's "Creation." Readers can double-click on any word in the Bible and be transferred to Webster's New World Dictionary or New World Thesaurus.

All this is packed onto one CD, with an extra CD thrown in containing children's Bible stories. This Windows-based program loads quickly and is easy to use. An audio-visual "guided tour" helps the beginning user under-

stand how this program works. Within minutes the user will be sailing through its fascinating features.

The program includes several "presentations," that is, multimedia discussions (on Bible study, Egypt, Masada, women of the Bible), and it encourages users to develop their own presentations, using text and sounds stashed away on the CD. A "journal" feature permits the student to take notes and print them off. I was not able to copy the pictures into this journal, as promised in the instructions. Either this is a bug, or it will require me to search a little more carefully through the relatively brief—and clear—manual.

The information provided by the introductions to the biblical books and the Bible dictionary is non-critical, although not militantly so, and, mostly, users are left to form their own interpretations. Nave's Topical Bible provides definitions for biblical people and concepts, but consists primarily of lists of relevant Bible passages, which pop up with a click. There are also various Bible reading programs. One leads the reader on a two-week contemplation of women in the Bible; another offers a 179-day sampling of every book of the Bible, one chapter at a time. An on-line link enables the user to pursue all items farther via America Online. This gives electronic access to Compton's Living Encyclopedia, bulletin boards, and religious Web sites.

In a day when many of us complain about biblical illiteracy, programs like this may entice Generation Xers and their children to browse the Bible, even to search the Scriptures. Sounds like a good educational strategy to me.

Ralph W. Klein

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1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615
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Briefly Noted

William R. Telford prints thirteen key articles on **The Interpretation of Mark** (T & T Clark, £14.95) in the second edition of this useful volume in the series Studies in New Testament Interpretation. He interprets recent developments in Markan studies and points to the issues in current debate in his introductory essay (required reading for anyone interested in the present status of Markan interpretation), and supplements the essays with an extensive bibliography of Markan studies since about 1970. The essays offer a rich repast, illustrating the wide range of methods and views on Mark summarized by Telford. Names are familiar: Eduard Schweizer, Ernest Best, Robert Fowler, Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, and Frank Matera, to name a few. Eight of the thirteen essayists are North American scholars; biblical research is alive in America. Selecting five essays to add to the eight presented in the first edition (1985) from over 250 published since about 1960 is no easy task. Every student of Mark will miss a favorite, but will recognize that the collection is balanced, instructive, and a good introduction to Markan studies. It will be on the bibliography of every course on Mark in the next decade at least. Pastors preaching on Mark will find this a good orientation. *Edgar Krentz*

Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality. Listening to Scripture. Edited by Robert L. Brawley (Westminster/John Knox, $17). After three essays on how we use the Bible in discussions of Christian ethics, the editor has assembled six essays on the Bible and human sexuality. One of these essays states that laws on sexuality in the Old Testament Holiness Code were designed to insure Israel's existence as a distinct group, while another contrasts the phenomenon of same-

sex relationships in the New Testament world and shows the incongruity of modern categories of sexual orientation with the first-century culture. This book arose out of a consultation at McCormick Theological Seminary in 1995, responding to the invitation of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to study dialogue on issues of human sexual behavior and orientation. RWK

The Portrait of Philip in Acts: A Study of Roles and Relations. By E. Scott Spencer (JSOT, $30). This volume offers a portrait of Philip by using both literary and historical methods to study the pertinent passages in Luke-Acts. Spencer examines the portrayal of Philip in Acts in its relation to the Samaritans (including Simon Magus), the Ethiopian eunuch, Peter, and Paul. He concludes that in the Acts narrative Philip plays a more important and positive role than most interpreters have noted. According to Spencer's analysis, Philip can be characterized as the "pioneering missionary," "dynamic prophet," and "cooperative servant." A revision of a doctoral study completed at the University of Durham, England, this volume makes a serious contribution to Luke-Acts studies.

James L. Bailey, WTS

William Klassen presents a re-interpretation of Jesus' disciple in **Judas: Friend or Betrayer of Jesus** (Fortress, $19). After examining the sources for understanding Judas he interprets the significance of the name Judas as a real name, not a symbolic term for Jew. The term παραδίδωμι, he argues, never means "betray" in Greek, but only to "hand over." Judas was not a malicious traitor; rather he was an informer who tried to arrange a meeting between the high priest and Jesus, hoping they would come to agreement. Klassen then examines the role of Jesus in each Gospel, tracing the development of the negative interpretation of Judas. Mark is relatively impartial, but the other three evangelists all give a negative portrayal. His suicide suggests that he was the first and strongest witness to the innocence of Jesus. Short chapters on Judas in recent Christian theology (W. Wagner, H. Gollwitzer, B. Dieckmann, K. Barth) and in Jewish scholarship conclude the investigation. Klassen concludes that we should avoid the use of the term "traitor" and recognize that Judas also played a role in the history of salvation. Friend or betrayer? It is hard to answer. Pastors will find some excellent resource material here for preaching in Lent. It's a helpful piece of historical revisionism, a recovery of the historical Judas, so to say. *Edgar Krentz*

Pheme Perkins provides a clear, concise introduction to the field in **Gnosticism and the New Testament** (Fortress, $17). In a graduate seminary some years ago a session devoted to a Gnostic text made clear how dense the thicket of Gnostic language is. Even the professor used a "crib sheet" to keep the terminology straight. A novice needing orientation in Gnostic studies can do no better than read the four chapters Perkins uses to introduce one to methodological issues and the sources for pre-Christian Gnosticism. She uses Claude Levi-Strauss' approach to myth to interpret Gnosticism and discuss how its themes and language appear in the New Testament, at the same time making the schism between Gnosticism and the New Testament texts clear. Her concluding chapters trace the history of Gnostic Christianity, treating the topics of conversion, asceticism, and the role of women, among others. She summarizes the last 25 years of scholarship, includes a useful glossary of Gnostic terminology and a basic introductory bibliography. Her sensible analysis, not dismissing Gnostic influences on the New Testament totally and recognizing Gnosticism as a form of early Christianity, is a good introduction for anyone who needs an orientation to the field. For any graduate student facing field examinations this is *the* book.

Lynn Allen Kauppi, LSTC

Preaching Helps

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost—Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Series B

With Eyes Half Open

Here we are, in the middle of the Pentecost Season. And the Gospel texts Sunday after Sunday march us slowly through John 6 and through the middle of Mark's Gospel.

I usually think of Mark as consisting of three large sections: (a) Teaching and Healing in Galilee (1:1–8:21); (b) On the Way with the Disciples (8:22–10:52); (c) Final Days in Jerusalem (11:1–16:8). The midsection of Mark begins (8:22-26) and ends (10:46-52) with miracles on behalf of blind people. The section ends with Jesus opening the eyes of blind Bartimaeus, who then immediately begins to follow Jesus on his Way. Bartimaeus is the very picture of a model disciple: healed and whole and seeing, he follows Jesus on the Way, even though the Way leads to the cross.

Bartimaeus is a familiar figure, but his counterpart at the opening of the midsection is badly known and it's hard to imagine that he will get better known any time soon. The lectionary simply omits his story (8:22-26). Matthew and Luke also let it fall aside. Perhaps they felt it to be a bit of an embarrassment. Jesus took an unnamed blind man aside, spit on his eyes, laid hands on him and then asked: "So, how's that?" The man replied, "Not too bad. I can see people now; at least I suppose they are people, because trees don't walk!" Hmmm. Jesus laid his hands on the man a second time. Then the man could see clearly.

Mark has not left us any footnotes, but that does not mean he hasn't planted a clue. The middle section of Mark focuses on Jesus' dealings with the Twelve, who see but don't see. This account of a healing in steps or stages is a perfect introduction. Mark has placed the narrative immediately before the story of Peter's confession to Jesus (8:29) followed by his rebuke of Jesus (8:32). Peter (and all the rest of them—and us?) have had our eyes opened by being with Jesus, and yet Peter could not yet see clearly. What's the problem? It's called "the cross" (8:31). It is hard to "see" that the cross of Jesus Christ should be

God's response to the ills of the world, and it's hard to "see" that our taking up the cross is the way to our true life (8:34-38).

From time to time of course we really get it, we really see what God is up to. But those "Aha!" moments are often followed by dimming sight and periods of confusion and unclarity. And so, like the nameless fellow in 8:22-26, we need to have Jesus lay hands on us time after time after time. And Jesus is willing to do so.

Maybe it's not such a bad idea that we spend all those Sundays moving at the pace of a snail through John 6. We could do worse! Jesus feeds the 5,000 (John 6:1-15), the only "miracle" (not John's word) of Jesus recorded in all four Gospels. Bread is basic, but the crowds do not see beyond their stomachs. It is hard for any of us. John and the lectionary compel us to spend the next four Sundays wrestling with the question of the food that really satisfies. What's so hard? John's answer is the same as Mark's (and Paul's and Luther's): it is not just Jesus' wisdom or his stunning teaching or his power that can fill us. It is not even "Jesus himself" who satisfies. It is "Jesus-with-his-death-on-the-cross" that is truly Bread for the World.

Helping us to see all this by writing the First Readings is **John Bucka**, Senior Pastor of House of Hope Lutheran Church in New Hope, Minnesota. He has written educational resources and confirmation materials for Augsburg Fortress (*Stop, Listen, and Love* and *Bible Basics: Ten Key Events in Jesus' Life*) and is an Associate of the Augsburg Youth and Family Institute.

The author of the Pastoral Reflections is **Lucy Kolin**, Pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Oakland, California. Somewhere in these pages Lucy admits to having lived for half a century now, and I think her acquired wisdom is showing. She always writes gracefully. Both she and John have contributed to Preaching Helps in days past, and once again I thank them for laying their hands on these texts and on our eyes.

To all of you I say, "Blessings," as you lay healing hands on eyes that would see Jesus.

Pentecostally Yours,

Robert H. Smith
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Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
July 27, 1997

Psalm 145:10-19
2 Kings 4:42-44
Ephesians 3:14-21
John 6:1-21

First Reading

My first reaction after taking this assignment was to remember a play written by a former professor of mine, Norman Habel, from my Concordia Seminary days: "What Are We Going To Do With All These Rotten Fish?" It mirrors my typical frustration whenever in my ministry I have come to the John 6 texts. Five weeks of John six! What do preachers do with all that bread?

Fortunately, the new revised lectionary has helped us in that regard. Added to the Gospel reading for Pentecost are verses 16-21. Those verses tell the story of Jesus who calms the fears of the disciples as they get away from the demands of the crowd to make Jesus their personal Bread King. Perhaps that is as good a place as any to start dealing with this text.

The addition of the extra six verses challenges us by asking the question: "Who is this man Jesus of Nazareth?" The question was faced by the budding disciples in the first chapter of John. He is the one "about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote" (1:45). He is "Rabbi... the Son of God... the King of Israel!"

The question surfaces once again here, however, after Jesus has fed the five thousand. The crowd's reaction to the miracle is to respond, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." In other words, there were more leftovers than even Elisha had in this Sunday's first reading. Since they believe he is the source of their nourishment, they rush him to try to force him to be their Bread King.

The disciples and Jesus withdraw. Jesus goes away by himself. The disciples get on a boat to go to Capernaum. The sea becomes stormy, but Jesus comes walking on the water. The disciples are frightened by what they perceive to be a spirit, or an apparition. Jesus responds to their fear, with what is the first of the "I Am" sayings in the Gospel of John. He says, Ego Eimi, "It is I!" Immediately, the text says, the boat finds itself on the other side of the lake.

The addition of these six verses tell the reader who this man Jesus really is. He is not a prophet. He is not a son of a prophet. He is not a biblical version of an ATM that dispenses bread on command. He is the very God, the One who will strengthen people in their inner beings as Ephesians states.

John writes in the prologue: "And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!" As the bread episode continues in this sixth chapter of John, it will be the glory of those two words, Ego Eimi, that will shape it, and give the episode its very center. JRB

Pastoral Reflection

This Sunday's Gospel reading is filled with the sort of people who populate all the Gospels—people who think they have everything figured out: themselves, their God, and their life's purpose. Their quick and comfortable analysis is based on the obvious and the predictable. In the story from John we find the crowds who think they know what they need: a miracle-working king rather than a prophet out of their control. And we see the disciples, especially Philip and Andrew, observing without seeing an occasion for ministry. Each person in this story suddenly finds their life and their assumptions surprisingly redefined by Jesus. Jesus does this by taking the initiative, by

asking questions, by drawing to the center those who have been on the margins, and by blessing and multiplying the ministry of the seemingly insufficient.

What appears to be a simple miracle story offers us much more to chew on than a morsel of pita bread. Having been created in the image of God and adopted as God's own children, we are a community whose life is meant to mirror the Holy One, whom we have come to know in Jesus. We, the church, are now called to take the initiative, to ask questions, to discern new occasions for ministry, to call forth from our midst the gifts we need for such ministry, and to trust that what seems insufficient will be blessed and multiplied for the good of all.

We remember Jesus whom the world thought insufficient for a savior and impotent in the face of death, but whose dying brought life to the whole world. We remember how in a morsel of bread and a sip of wine we meet Jesus and receive forgiveness and life. And we remember that our ability to minister within and beyond our particular congregations of communities of faith is not defined or limited by the obvious or the predictable. Instead, in that Humpty Dumpty way of the gospel, our potential for ministry is limited and defined only by the discerning eye of the Holy Spirit and by all the gifts and the gifted God continues to provide us, some of them still to be revealed.

Perhaps this is the Sunday for an interactive sort of sermon around questions like these: Are we living open to the possibility of new ministry? Have we looked where the Spirit is pointing, even if it's in a corner we haven't explored lately or before? Are we looking at one another with an eye to seeing our giftedness? Are we welcoming and employing new gifts and new people? Who knows what that conversation might reveal about the present and future of our church? LK

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
August 3, 1997

Psalm 78:23-29
Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15
Ephesians 4:1-16
John 6:24-36

First Reading

As we look at the readings for this week, I am reminded of the way John ends his Gospel: "But these (signs) are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you might have life in his name." Especially as we approach the first reading and the Gospel, we begin at the primary level of what both the children of Israel and the crowds need to support their daily lives.

Both groups focus on bread. The children of Israel are fed the bread or manna that comes from heaven while they are in the wilderness. But they complain that they no longer have the luxurious spice-laden food of Egypt upon which to feast. In the Exodus account the emphasis is on the God who provides sufficient food for the Children of Israel to be satisfied each day: "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not" (16:4).

After eating their fill, the five thousand simply want more bread, a never-ending supply of bread. Jesus confronts them by saying, "You didn't come because you interpreted the miracle as a sign; you came because you ate, and your hunger was satisfied."

Jesus senses knows that the crowd is looking for ways to sustain physical life. What they fail to see, however, is that the

important issue is not the sustenance of their *bios*. It is rather that which helps nourish their *zoe*, that life that continues to be sustained and supported by God, that life that transcends the *bios*. What is needed is not infatuation with the signs, as if the signs themselves will save. What is needed is for the crowd to recognize that the work of God is to believe in the one whom God has sent.

The support and nourishment of the *zoe* comes not from loaves of bread but from the very Son of God, who says, "I am the Bread of Life." Now it can be debated whether the episode contains a Passover motif or a Eucharistic motif. It really in the end does not matter. What does matter is John's ability to remind the readers that the signs this man Jesus performs are recorded so that we the readers might believe. And then with the Holy Spirit's help we may be able to do the work of God. JRB

Pastoral Reflection

When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat."

It seems the Israelites didn't know what to make of manna; it was not the bread they'd been expecting. Of course, they were expecting food, since it was their complaints—or whining, if you will—that had moved God to make an arrangement for a daily food drop: quail in the evening, bread in the morning. Evidently the quail were unmistakable, but the manna was like nothing they'd seen before. So they questioned Moses and were satisfied enough with his answer to begin gathering and eating it regularly.

In a way, it is the same scenario in the reading from John. Jesus, who had fed thousands, was questioned by the crowd about the true bread from heaven, which promised to satisfy forever. They were curious about the bread and were looking for it. Yet all the while the Bread from heaven stood before them, freely available. Like the Israelites, this was bread in a form they were not expecting and so did not recognize.

And so it is with us. We, too, long to be filled and comforted and satisfied with the bread God has promised us. But often we fail to recognize it, for it comes to us in the simplicity of a word or in water poured or in a crumb of bread. Like the Israelites and the crowd surrounding Jesus, we sometimes fail to recognize who and what we are receiving, because they come in such ordinary and familiar forms.

But the Spirit of Jesus wills to give us eyes to see and hearts to trust that what we are touching, tasting, and receiving is the true Bread from heaven, still freely available, still able to satisfy our deepest longings and fill our deepest needs.

And when we have seen and tasted this Bread, we may then help others to see it, taste it, and experience its life-giving nourishment. LK

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
August 10 , 1997

Psalm 34:1-8
1 Kings 19:4-8
Ephesians 4:25–5:2
John 6:35, 41-51

First Reading

If there is a connection between the first reading and the Gospel we might make the argument that both texts deal with the complaints of individuals. They also tell us how God responds to the complaints, whether they are voiced by Elijah, or by the people who still need to dialogue with Jesus about the feeding of the five thousand.

In the 1 Kings passage, Elijah finds himself running for his life. After the show of power with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah tells the people to gather Baal's prophets and prevent their escape. At the Wadi Kashon, Elijah kills them. Reacting to the massacre, Jezebel swears that she will kill Elijah for murdering her prophets.

As Elijah runs, he finds himself in the wilderness and tries to gain some shade under the shadow of a broom tree. He sits and complains, and waits to die. God has a different idea, however, and provides for him a baked cake and a jar of water. He eats enough to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb. There he finds a cave and spends the night. What is excluded from this episode is as important as what is presented. God is not found in a whirlwind, in an earthquake, in fire. God is found in the stillness of the silent moment. In spite of Elijah's complaints, God does not forsake Elijah.

In this Sunday's Gospel, the crowd begins to question, and complain. "Isn't this Joseph's son? How can he have the audacity to claim that he will give us the bread that comes from heaven? The curious part of this text is that in spite of the crowd's complaints Jesus continues to talk. He continues to focus on what should really matter in the life of these complainers. He says, "Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, and they died. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

The wonder of Elijah's experience and of the doubters in the Gospel is that in spite of their complaints, the relationship continues. God continues to be patient with Elijah and provide for him. Jesus continues to weed through the doubts of the crowd and provide for them as well. He continues to offer them the bread which will empower them to live forever.

That's what makes these readings so marvelous. They both reveal the depths and riches of God's grace. In the end it is God's grace that sustains us, satisfies us, and ultimately silences our complaints no matter where the wildernesses of our lives might be, and no matter who in our family we might find in that wilderness. JRB

Pastoral Reflection

I have always liked to read biographies—the stories of heroes and eccentrics, rulers and rascals, writers and revolutionaries. Of course, there are two sorts of biographies: the authorized and the unauthorized—those written with their subject's permission, which often paint a smooth, unsullied portrait of the person; and those written without the subject's cooperation that show the person, warts and all.

The Book of Kings contains quite a number of biographies, and Elijah's is one of the best. We aren't told too much about his early life; indeed, we don't even have the story of his call. But between the beginning and the end of Elijah's story is the stuff of which legends are made. We are given

accounts of being fed by ravens, of raising a widow's son to life, of successfully challenging the political and religious establishments, and, last but not least, of being carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire.

But there is one curious chapter in the life of this prophetic heavyweight, which Elijah may or may not have wanted to include. This chapter, contained in the first reading, shows Elijah at his lowest ebb, in a moment of great weakness. After a stunning triumph on Mt. Carmel, where the prophets of Baal were revealed as spiritually and theologically bankrupt, Elijah runs away to the wilderness, determined to turn in his prophet's commission and die. The great prophet suffers a spiritual, if not clinical, depression, runs like a wounded, hunted animal, and, finding hope evaporating, sees death as the only avenue of escape.

But God intervenes, making it possible for Elijah to have hope again and to go on. God does this not by chewing him out or dressing him down or even giving him a pep-talk overnight. Instead, God sends an angel, food, and a message of hope. The messenger is tender and attentive to the weary prophet, gentling Elijah back to health and hope, reminding him to do the obvious: eat and drink. God cares for Elijah and prepares him for the day when he will once more be able to do and to give.

In many ways, this is our story, too. We may find ourselves depressed about the state of the church, exhausted by our responsibilities, and despairing of the fruitfulness of our ministry. Then God does for us what God did for Elijah: sends us food and drink and hope.

Of course, it is no ordinary messenger God sends, but Jesus himself: the one who in his own body has known weariness and depression and been nourished by the angels, the one who is himself the food we need for the journey still to come, the journey of faith and life and work. In the Holy Communion, especially, God touches us tenderly and lets us taste hope in a meal that will sustain us not just for forty days and nights, but for eternity. And tasting the bread of hope, we dare to rise again, confident of a future of blessing. LK

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
August 17, 1997

Psalm 34:9-14
Proverbs 9:1-6
Ephesians 5:15-20
John 6:51-58

First Reading

Knowing your limits is one of the themes woven throughout this Sunday's readings. On the one hand Proverbs speaks of wisdom. Personified wisdom, Lady Sophia, invites those who are simple to come and eat bread and drink wine. One gets the sense that the simple are not those who are ignorant, but those who are willing to become centered, to eat, drink, and learn from the teaching of wisdom.

The opposite of this scene comes directly following verses 13-18. Wisdom is contrasted with the foolish woman. The foolish woman is the one who is ignorant, without sense; she invites those who come to her feast saying, "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." The eating of secret bread and the drinking of stolen water is deadly, because at that banquet are not the living, but the guests who come from the depths of Sheol.

Psalm 34 reinforces the limits theme when it exclaims, "Depart from evil and do good." In other words, Know who you are and what it is that you are doing. Ephesians

continues when it says, "Be careful how you live, not as unwise people, but as wise, understanding the will of the Lord."

It is precisely this theme that troubles the listeners in the portion of John we read for this Sunday. Jesus finally identifies the bread about which he speaks. The bread is none other than his flesh. He expands the boundaries and, at least in the minds of some listeners present, goes beyond the limits when he says, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them."

The people don't quite know what Jesus is talking about. Eating flesh for Jews was a violation of the Law. How could Jesus possibly suggest anything such as this?

As we step back and look at what is happening, we see that what is taking place is Jesus' statement about humankind's inability to fulfill the Law of God. Wisdom does not do what God wants it to do. In fact, the Law, instead of helping people to do the will of God, has become a barrier to fulfilling that exact will.

As a result God gives the son, who suffers, dies, and offers himself in body and blood so that humankind might know how committed God is to God's people. This is a flesh and blood commitment. This is a commitment that leads people to trust that God will never abandon God's people. In the midst of the demands for signs and wisdom about which the Apostle Paul once wrote, the message of Christ crucified, the message about the One who gave his body and blood for humankind is the One who saves, and the One who gives new life. JRB

Pastoral Reflection

The writer of Ephesians uses an interesting phrase to describe how the community of Christians is to live: he calls the church to "making the most of the time." That phrase may make us think of efficiency experts of an apocalyptic bent. It would seem the writer is talking about a kind of frenzied, down-to-the-wire activity of witness.

But such apocalypticism doesn't suit the style of this letter or this text. Instead, "making the most of the time" seems an urging to the sort of Christian life that expands and deepens to fill the time—whatever time is available—and that "redeems" the time by weighting the world with hope and holy wisdom.

The writer offers some suggestions about what that sort of life might be. What he describes is not stern or unyielding, but filled with enthusiasm (yes, of the Spirit-filled sort), discernment, joy, praise and thanksgiving. And the "carefulness" with which the Ephesians are called to live is not wariness or tentativeness, but living intentionally and alert to the will of God.

This is not a model just for Ephesus or for the early church. Rather, it offers inspiration to our own congregations and ministries. When enthusiasm replaces dull routine and obligation, filling every moment with purposefulness, we become outposts of joy born of knowing our life together is a powerful piece of God's grand evangelistic design. When our movement together in the dance of grace is prayerfully and patiently discerned, we can have confidence that it is God at work in us and through us. When we join together in praise, we experience the strength of gospel solidarity. And when our days and our prayers are filled with thanksgiving, we find ourselves moved beyond self-proclaimed limitations and deeper into a life embedded in the surety of God's promises and gifts.

Such knowing and such patterning of community life is made possible by the feast of wisdom and thanksgiving which God freely offers: the bread of life and the cup of joy. This is the feast Christ our Wisdom prepares for us, a meal filled with the fullness of his own life and death and resurrection. LK

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
August 24, 1997

Psalm 34:15-22
Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18
Ephesians 6:10-20
John 6:56-69

First Reading

It's a jungle out there! What terrible choices and opportunities face children as they grow! The words have been echoed by parents throughout the ages. But they could have been spoken by the characters in our texts for this Sunday: by Joshua, Peter, and Paul.

The Children of Israel had finally crossed over the Jordan. The promised land belonged to them after forty years in the wilderness. One might conclude that the Children of Israel finally would be safe from outside threats. Joshua, however, seems to say, "Beware of the jungle of foreign gods who surround you, and neighboring people who would seduce you from Yahweh the true God."

Joshua calls the leaders of the tribes to Shechem and finally says, "Choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living." Then Joshua concludes, "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord!"

In this Sunday's Gospel, some of Jesus' followers turn away. Why? The saying about Jesus offering his body and blood to eat is just too offensive. Any self-respecting student of the Law would have been offended. When Jesus sees some of his followers leaving he says to Peter, "And you? Will you leave as well?" Peter answers, "It's a jungle out there! Where else would we go?" In the course of the liturgy, we answer with Peter, "Lord, to whom (else) shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Finally the letter to the Ephesians paints the dangers of that jungle in clearer terms and helps us understand what is at stake. Paul writes of a life and death struggle against rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places. Paul urges us to put on the whole armor of God, imploring us and all his readers to take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

In the end, then, the readings proclaim the news that we are not alone in the struggle. Jesus Christ, by giving his flesh and blood, became victorious over the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this present darkness. Therefore the end of the struggle is not in doubt. Nothing is able to tear us away from the power of God's love. JRB

Pastoral Reflection

So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Earlier in the reading, many of Jesus' disciples were offended by his teaching, in which he proclaimed himself the true bread that came down from heaven, the bread that gives eternal life. Indeed, the Fourth Evangelist says the disciples complained on the sidelines, saying, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" And many abandoned him and "no longer went about with him."

Jesus' response to all this was twofold. To those who complained and took offense in his hearing, Jesus refused to give a more moderate reading of the text of his life. Instead, he piled offense on offense by making even bolder assertions about his intimacy with God. "Does this offend you?" he said. "Then what if you were to see the Son-

of-Man ascending to where he was before?"

And to the twelve later, he asked, "Do you also wish to go away?" The answer Jesus received was not an overwhelming vote of confidence, nor an unwavering statement of faith. Indeed, Peter's answer on behalf of the disciples seems to suggest that they continue with him almost reluctantly. They know the value of his word and confess to the life it gives. Yet they cannot say, "We take no offense." Theirs is a desperate clinging to the Word, based on their need, that runs against the grain of their logic and instincts for self-preservation.

Perhaps this is an honest picture of *all* the disciples of Christ and of the community of disciples we call church. We confess that Jesus has the words of eternal life. We also confess that we often find them difficult and offensive and not what we or the world wants to hear. Yet the Holy Spirit calls, gathers and enlightens us, sanctifies and keeps us united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith, even when we would like to run away and disassociate ourselves from this troubling yet charismatic Savior. As we follow, still with some misgivings and fear, we can be certain that the Word of life will continue to be at work in us and among us, turning scandal and offense into faith and commitment, until we can take Jesus always at his word. LK

St. Bartholomew, Apostle
August 24, 1997

Psalm 12
Exodus 19:1-6
1 Corinthians 12:27-31a
John 1:43-51

It seems unusual that the Gospel for this day of St. Bartholomew makes no mention of his name. In fact, there is no mention of Bartholomew in the Gospel of John at all. Some scholars have speculated that Nathanael in John's Gospel is in reality Bartholomew. At the same time, there is no mention of Nathanael's name in the synoptics. Tradition says that Bartholomew was a missionary to many countries. Eusebius states that he went to India, preached the gospel, and left behind the Gospel of Matthew in that land.

The first reading speaks of the theophany at Sinai in the wilderness. God reminds Moses that God was the one who brought the Children of Israel from Egypt on eagle's wings. God makes the covenant promise that Israel will be God's people if they obey God's voice. The first reading focuses on the relationship that God has established with Israel and the importance of that relationship as it is linked to Israel's survival.

The second reading reinforces the fact that the Corinthians are the body of Christ. Even though there are deep divisions within the Corinthian congregation, it is Christ who still remains the head. Paul says very carefully that within the body of Christ there will be divisions of labor, and not everyone will have the same gifts, or abilities. This text is the passage that sets up Paul's hymn to love. If the Corinthians are to survive as a congregation, it will be because the agape love given from God will bind them together.

The Gospel retells the story of the call of Nathanael/Bartholomew. John captures the

rising excitement of Philip as he encounters Nathanael/Bartholomew and contrasts Philip's enthusiasm with Nathanael/Bartholomew's skepticism, "Can any good thing come from Nazareth?"

Nathanael/Bartholomew is prepared to dislike Jesus until Jesus says that he knew his name, even when he saw him sitting under the fig tree. Could it be that Nathanael/Bartholomew was an excellent scholar of the Hebrew scriptures? Could it be that Nathanael/Bartholomew remembered the words of Micah 4:4 when the prophet wrote about days to come, "They shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees"? Some scholars have made the claim that Nathanael/Bartholomew's recollection of this verse added to the excitement of the moment. It is a mysterious moment, but the message still is clear: God knows and loves God's people. God remembers and keeps God's promises; and because God does, the people of God have hope. JRB

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
August 31, 1997

Psalm 15
Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9
James 1:17-27
Mark 7:1-7, 14-15, 21-23

First Reading

There are times when I think my Lutheran upbringing prevented me from seeing the value of what God was trying to do with Israel in the wilderness. I grew up with the phrase that I later learned at the seminary, "*Lex semper accusat!*" ("The law always accuses!") I never truly saw the hand of God's love at work in the giving of the law. How could something that always accuses me be a result of God's love?

If we look at Israel's situation in the wilderness, and especially the Deuteronomic insistence upon obeying the law, an insistence that Josiah took to heart as he began his reform of Judah, we can see God's loving hand at work behind the giving of the Law. How would Israel remain faithful in the wilderness? How was Israel going to exist and remain faithful as they entered the promised land of Canaan? How would the monarchy continue to be faithful under the boy king Josiah? The gift of the Law from a loving God played a vital role.

The letter of James expands the function of the Law. The Law is not only there for the protection of the believers against the world, but it should remind believers that God delights in care for the orphans and widows. Far from being an epistle of straw as Luther wrote, James writes for believers, emphasizing that grace is free but not cheap. The sense of the letter flows like this for me: Since you have been saved by Christ, you will want to respond with a grateful obedience.

That brings us to the words of Mark's Gospel. In these verses, Jesus balances everything that we have said previously by making the claim that observation of the Law needs to be more than just a ritualistic going through the motions. If that is all it becomes, then we have forgotten one crucial fact of life." It is from the heart that all evil proceeds. Obedience in an outward form means nothing, unless there is renewal from within.

In the waters of our baptism we have been renewed, because there we have died and risen with Christ. William Willimon paraphrases Martin Luther when he says, "Baptism is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that takes a life-time to complete!" JRB

Pastoral Reflection

But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.

Having just turned fifty, I have heard just about all of the currently funny jokes about fading memory. But turning fifty has also reminded me of all the information and memories my brain has accumulated. Perhaps my Lutheran parochial school education with all its years of memorization has something to do with this habit of committing to memory every last scrap of information and every last memory of life experiences.

The words from Deuteronomy seem to be instructing Israel to fill the memory banks of the next generation—to fill them with the glorious and redeeming substance of God's wisdom and God's word. How this happens will involve both formal instruction and the recounting of God's mighty deeds in the words of parents and elders.

Today we, too, take these instructions seriously in the church, at home, and around the globe. There are Sunday Schools and mission schools, youth retreats, and books of home devotions, so that our children and youth may know God and God's will for their lives.

But the Deuteronomist, while concerned for the transmission of the faith down through the generations, also seems to say that in teaching the young, in telling aloud and reading aloud the stories of faith and grace, we, their elders, are afforded an opportunity to keep those words from slipping from *our* minds or losing ground in *our* hearts.

"I Love to Tell the Story" is one of those favorite Sunday School hymns that also makes its way into Sunday morning liturgy. Its stanzas tell of the joy in sharing the story of God's love with those who are longing for Good News, for those who have yet to hear it. But there is also a stanza that tells how blessed and important it is to repeat that story to "those who know it best." As the hymn writer says, we for whom it is an old, old, familiar story are often as hungry and thirsty for that News as those who are hearing it for the very first time.

In this Pentecost time, the growing season of the church, let us be intentional in telling the story of grace and the message of hope and the vision of the life God has prepared for us. Then this generation, as well as the next, may glory in God's wisdom, find encouragement in God's promise, and call the world to behold and receive the God of compassion. LK

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 7, 1997

Psalm 146
Isaiah 35:4-7a
James 2:1-10 (11-13) 14-17
Mark 7:24-37

First Reading

Who is sick? Who are those who experience life as though they were on the outside looking in? These questions might guide our discussion of today's texts. In Isaiah 35, the writer looks to a gracious return to Zion by the Israelites from exile. In exile the Israelites experience life on the outside. In exile, they ask the question: "Is it possible for us to worship God in a foreign land, far from our home and our temple?"

It is to those questions that Isaiah addresses his words. The day will come when the exile will be ended. Israel will once again experience life inside the circle. Isaiah paints

a picture of coming Eden-like harmony. The chaos of exile is over. The land to which Israel returns will be filled with the lame who leap like deer. Waters will break forth in the wilderness. The covenant will be renewed.

James continues to address the opening questions by acknowledging that every good and perfect gift comes from above. At the same time, he admonishes his readers that they dare not keep these good and perfect gifts to themselves. James' faith is never exclusive. His descriptions of what it means to be a Christian never lead one to conclude that he or she must not share this good news with anyone. Rather, James implores his readers to go outside their own circle and supply the bodily needs of those who are less fortunate than they. We can almost hear James say, "Acts of faith speak as loudly as confessing the words of faith!" Both faith and actions are needed. Both acts and faith are desired by God.

Mark's Gospel enhances the theme. Jesus enters the region of Tyre where he is met by a woman whose daughter is possessed by an unclean spirit. This woman who is outside the circle of Judaism refuses to be deterred by Jesus' apparent unwillingness to help her daughter. Jesus responds by meeting her request and bringing her into the circle.

Jesus then goes to the region of Decapolis where he meets a man who has an impediment in his speech. This man also by nature of his malady was outside the circle and outside the fellowship. Jesus responds by placing his finger into his ears, touching his tongue, and saying "Ephphatha!" which means, "Be opened!"

As Jesus continues his ministry, the issue will become even clearer. It will be those who are outside the circle, who supposedly are not able to talk, not able to see, who *will* be able to see, talk, and come into the fellowship. But those who see, who are insiders, by excluding Jesus will exclude themselves and become blind. JRB

Pastoral Reflection

"Ephphatha!" said Jesus. "Be opened!" And with a touch of spit and fingers placed in unhearing ears, a man who could neither hear nor speak properly was instantly healed. This is a wonderful story, told simply and directly by the writer of Mark. But it is more than just another healing story from the Gospels. It is a story about how God opens all of us, individually and as the church, healing us of all that would stand in the way of our hearing and speaking God's Good News.

"Ephphatha!" The very first opening was when a group of people, Gentiles according to the story, brought their friend to Jesus for the laying on of hands. We aren't told what made them decide to bring their friend to Jesus. All we know is that at some level God's Spirit moved them to seek an opening, a breakthrough in the depressing pattern of dependence and disability. They placed the man in Jesus' path, trusting that Jesus would step into the opening they had made and change everything. And so he did.

"Ephphatha!" Jesus spoke these words in private, with only heaven as his witness. He spoke the word aloud, the way God uttered the word that created the heavens, the earth, and humanity itself. But he also spoke them in the way the man could most surely understand: in gesture, sign, and touch. And the man was healed—open to hearing and speaking what he had experienced and seen.

"Ephphatha!" Though spoken in the presence of only one man, these words powerfully affected the whole crowd. For when Jesus spoke and the man was healed, their tongues, too, were released and they found it impossible to keep from speaking the wonder of what they had seen.

"Ephphatha!" God still speaks this word today... to us. But lest we find it impossible

to hear the voice of God over the din of the world's strife or the chaos of our own distress, God speaks to us in Jesus, who is "Ephphatha" incarnate. God's Ephphatha in flesh and bone speaks and touches us with the word of life and we are opened, freed, released to hear God's story of love and to share the Good News.

But questions remain: will we come to be set free? Are we willing to let God see our impediments? Are we willing to admit that we have impediments? And will we dare to let God touch us in such a personal and intimate way, as Jesus moistened the tongue and touched the very insides of the man in today's Gospel? Or will we continue to be imperfect and reluctant bearers of the Word, doomed to repeat it in muddled fashion like players in some churchly game of "Telephone"?

Whatever the answers to such sharp and searching questions, the truth remains that our impediments—whether fear, shyness, lack of imagination, or failure of the will—are no impediments to God. God promises to touch each of us and all of us in a way that opens our hearts and minds, our hands and lips, and makes of us faithful and willing communicators of the Word. LK

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 14, 1997

Psalm 116:1-8
Isaiah 50:4-9a
James 3:1-12
Mark 8:27-38

First Reading

Great Expectations was the title of the Charles Dickens novel I read in ninth grade. I remember very little of it, to be honest. I do remember that the main character, named Pip, the boy whom we followed throughout his life, was always a rather sad figure. His expectations for happiness, fulfillment, and contentment were never quite realized.

"Great Expectations" could also be an appropriate way for us to look at this Sunday's texts. The first reading from the prophet Isaiah encompasses the third Servant Song in which the prophet speaks of the servant who has the tongue of a teacher, who calmly and patiently submits to his persecutors; and who reacts confidently because he knows that his vindication is near. We make the traditional connections between the servant and Christ. But how many fail to arrive at the fulfillment of expectations? It is easier to be repelled than attracted when confronted by God in the guise of a servant.

In the Gospel of Mark Jesus is at Caesarea Philippi where great expectations surface once again. Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Some say "John the Baptist," others say "Elijah," others answer "One of the prophets." Peter replies, "You are the Messiah!"

After this, Jesus begins to teach his disciples about the fact that the Son of Man will undergo suffering, finally be killed, and after three days rise again. As Peter listens to Jesus, the words he hears do not fit his great

expectations. Peter rebukes Jesus! He in effect says, "Don't talk that way!" Nowhere in Peter's set of great expectations does he include the possibility that the Messiah, the king from David's line, will suffer and die on the way to his reign.

Jesus then rebukes Peter, accusing him of grounding his expectations not on "divine things" but on "human things." Jesus inverts the pyramid of Peter's expectations as well as the expectations of the world. For to find one's self will mean that one has to lose one's self. And to follow Jesus will mean that his followers must take up their cross and follow him. In the end, it will be those who lose their lives for the sake of the gospel who will find them. Ultimately, when all is said and done, Peter and all who come to Jesus with great expectations will receive much more than they ever dreamed. JRB

Pastoral Reflection

The language of death and the overtones of martyrdom in this Gospel reading may make us uncomfortable or, worse, may lead us to believe that we have no opportunities to make such a wholehearted response to the covenant of life that God made with us. Yet it is most often in the day-to-day challenges and opportunities that our fidelity is tempted and tested. Fred Craddock, that fine preacher, puts it this way: "We think giving our all to the Lord is like taking a $1000 bill and laying it on the table—"Here's my life, Lord. I'm giving it all." But the reality for most of us is, God sends us to the bank and has us cash in the $1000 bill for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there.... Usually giving our life to Christ isn't glorious. It's done in all those little acts of love, 25 cents at a time."

And the 25-cent situations are real challenges, make no mistake. For we can talk ourselves out of them; we can tell ourselves they don't count... or don't count for much. But it is those 25-cent moments that tell the truth about our discipleship and our allegiance. Those moments when the barrenness of our lives and the hopelessness of our situation stand out starkly against the daily landscape of life, when we find ourselves hesitating and wondering about the viability of God's promises and the liability of our witness, when the adrenaline of fear replaces the adrenaline of faith in our veins.

But the Spirit of Jesus calls to our spirits, not only commanding our loyalty but promising as well the grace and power to give it. This is the God who comes to us again and again, absurdly, mysteriously, faithfully, and surely under bread and wine, filling us with the Yes that satisfies our deepest desires, renewing the promise that prevents death and all its lesser accomplices from destroying us.

And having offered us such grace and power and hope, God calls us to express it in all the 25-cent moments of our lives. When we do, we will find ourselves and our communities of ministry lining up behind Jesus, aligning ourselves with the God of life. And in such solidarity, we will make a glad and persuasive witness to the world that the resurrection brings life from death, green and growing hope from the dry wood of the cross, passionate discipleship from the uncommitted. LK

Holy Cross Day
An alternative for
September 14, 1997

Psalm 98:1-5
Numbers 21:4b-9
1 Corinthians 1:18-24
John 3:13-17

September 14 has been celebrated as Holy Cross Day for more than 1500 years. It began as a commemoration of the discovery of the cross by Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, in the fourth century. Through the years it has been marked by rituals resembling those of Good Friday with the Adoration of the Cross. And the texts focus on the healing power of the cross (John 3:13-17) and on the great but paradoxical wisdom and power of the cross (1 Cor 1:18-24).

The passage from Numbers reflects the dissatisfaction of the Children of Israel as they experienced life in the wilderness. God's response to this dissatisfaction was to send poisonous serpents into the midst of the people to attack them as a sign of God's judgment. The people interpret the attack exactly in that vein. They say to Moses, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you."

After the people repent, God instructs Moses to make a serpent of bronze upon a pole and then says, "Whoever looks upon the serpent will live." Jesus refers to this incident and then points to his death when he says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the Son of Man be lifted up!"

In the midst of the divisions at Corinth, Paul refers to the power and wisdom of the cross. If any healing of divisions is possible at Corinth, it will not be through miracles or through the wisdom of the world. In contrast to what the world adores, the message of the cross seems foolish and weak indeed.

And yet, it is through the message of the cross that the divisions in Corinth will be healed. The cross reminds us how the division between ourselves and our Creator God has been healed through the lifting up of this Son of Man. The cross then becomes much more than a religious symbol or a piece of decorative jewelry. The cross becomes a reminder of the suffering, sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, and we whom Paul names the "called" can use the cross to bring healing to others as well. JRB

Eighteenth Sunday after
Pentecost
September 21, 1997

Psalm 54
Jeremiah 11:18-20
James 3:13–4:3,7-8a
Mark 9:30-37

First Reading

The flow of the lessons for this Sunday seems somewhat disjointed. The first reading deals with the lament of Jeremiah. Jeremiah has discovered an assassination plot against his life. He feels betrayed, hurt, abandoned by God. From the depths of his despair he cries out, not only in self-pity, but for God to vindicate him and punish his accusers.

Psalm 54 continues the theme of lament. Verses 1 and 2 serve as an address of the complainant to God. Once the address has been spoken, the complaint is voiced: "For the insolent have risen against me, the ruthless seek my life; they do not set God before them" (v. 3).

Next comes the confession of faith and the confidence of the psalmist that God will answer the prayer and grant deliverance from the hands of the adversary (vv. 4-5). Finally, having rid himself of the threat and having given his concerns and emotions to God, the psalmist gives thanks for all that God has done and will continue to do.

James takes a look at complaints in a different light. He worries that complaints will divide the people of God. In fact, James voices his concern that conflicts and disputes will lead to other more devastating acts such as murder.

The Gospel raises Jesus' concern that the disciples not seek a position of greatness. The attitude Jesus wishes the disciples to develop is one of a welcoming hospitality. The disciples are to put away all their concerns for power and authority. He himself has come to be servant of all. As long as Peter, James, John, and all the rest of us resist the cross and refuse to be servants we are thinking human things and not things divine. Jesus has reason to raise great lamentation, but he patiently walks the path up to Jerusalem, calling disciples to follow. JRB

Pastoral Reflection

Conflict in the church makes headlines and troubles the waters of every congregation. This is no new development, as the lessons for this Sunday demonstrate. From the schemes that injure the "lamb" of Jeremiah, trying the heart and mind, to the conflicts and disputes which James addresses, born of envy and selfish ambition, to the jockeying for power that Jesus observed in his own inner circle of disciples—conflict has a very long history in the life of the people of God.

The stuff that these scriptures discuss is not the stuff of honest differences and open debate. Rather, it is the sort of conflict that comes from the eternal temptation to violate the First Commandment. In our desire to unseat God and to ensure ourselves the best seats at the feast of economic and religious power, we—even we, the people of faith—are willing to sacrifice our neighbor and unleash the venom and violence of harsh words or deadly manipulation.

The damage done is great and can last for generations. The church is diminished, its message of love and welcome is compromised, and whole communities and congregations have their ministry and wholeness impaired.

The damage done to those stirring up such unnecessary conflict is great as well. For their work of undoing community is a symptom of their own fear and insecurity. Their need to have priority in God's eyes and the church's often is a sign that they fear they have no standing at all with God, that they cannot believe the message of grace could work for them.

For those who have been hurt and for those who have inflicted such hurt, the remedy is the same: to look to Jesus, who refused to be driven by fear or ambition, who went "as a lamb to the slaughter," who rested in the confidence that he was God's and who put the good of all before his own safety and desire. Jesus is the one who lived out what the angels proclaimed to the shepherds in Luke's Gospel, to be and to bring "peace among those whom God favors."

As disciples of that same Jesus, we are called to imitate him in words and deeds that express and further such peace. That is possible because the One the angels announced has come and made peace among strangers and enemies in his own body. Now the Spirit of Jesus dwells within us, giving us the gifts we need to make peace among strangers and enemies in Christ's own body, the church. This is Good News indeed! LK

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